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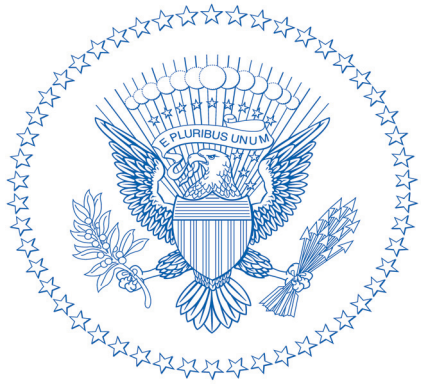
PUBLIC PAPERS OF THE PRESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES

PUBLIC PAPERS OF THE PRESIDENTS
OF THE
UNITED STATES

Barack Obama



2009

(IN TWO BOOKS)

BOOK I—JANUARY 20 TO JUNE 30, 2009

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON : 2010

Published by the
Office of the Federal Register
National Archives and Records Administration

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
• Internet: bookstore.gpo.gov • Phone: (202) 512–1800 • Fax: (202) 512–2250
• Mail: Stop SSOP, Washington, DC 20401

Foreword

I was sworn into office during a period of great consequence in America. Abroad, we were waging two wars while fighting a far-reaching network of violence and hatred. At home, a financial crisis threatened to plunge our economy into another Great Depression. Amid job losses, foreclosures, and soaring costs, Americans felt like the dream of our founding was slipping out of reach.

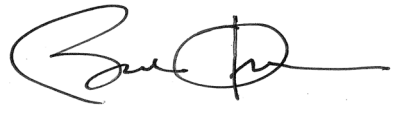
Our immediate responsibility was to end the worst economic crisis in generations. That is why we took necessary, but not necessarily popular, steps to shore up the financial system and America's auto industry. And that is why we enacted the Recovery Act—a bill that put Americans to work, offered relief to individuals, families, and States, and helped prevent an even greater economic catastrophe.

Even as we took these steps, we also pursued a broader effort to bring about meaningful change. We helped guarantee equal pay for equal work for men and women; expand health insurance for children; protect our great outdoors; broaden opportunities to serve this country; protect consumers with a Credit Card Bill of Rights; safeguard children from being targeted by tobacco companies; and remove barriers to responsible stem cell research. To curb the influence of special interest lobbyists, we enacted tougher ethics and transparency rules than any administration in history. And I nominated Sonia Sotomayor to the Supreme Court of the United States.

This is what we did to secure and strengthen America in the short-run. But we also needed to lay a new foundation for growth and prosperity over the long-term. That's why we sought to reform our health insurance system to bring down costs, make coverage affordable, and get our fiscal house in order. That's why we began to transition to a clean energy economy to free America from the grip of foreign oil, and clean up our air, while creating millions of quality jobs. That's why we began the work of putting in place tough, common-sense rules of the road for Wall Street so that we never find ourselves in a similar crisis again. And that's why we launched a historic effort to improve our education system to prepare America to compete and win in the 21st century.

Abroad, we began to responsibly end the war in Iraq, laying out a clear timetable for the drawdown of our forces. We strengthened our commitment to fighting al Qaeda in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and around the world, with increased resources. We banned torture without exception or equivocation. We advanced the cause of nuclear nonproliferation, laying out an ambitious agenda to secure vulnerable nuclear materials, reduce nuclear arsenals, and stop the spread of nuclear weapons. And we reaffirmed American leadership in the international effort to combat climate change, while working through the G–20 to coordinate a global response to the economic crisis.

None of this has been easy. As I said on the campaign trail, real change never is. But over these past 6 months, I have been inspired, again and again, by the persistence and perseverance of the American people. And I am absolutely confident that we will not only meet these challenges, at home and abroad, but come out on the other side, as we always have, more prosperous, more secure, and more hopeful, as a people.



Preface

This book contains the papers and speeches of the President of the United States that were issued by the Office of the Press Secretary during the period January 1–June 30, 2009. The material has been compiled and published by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration.

The material is presented in chronological order, and the dates shown in the headings are the dates of the documents or events. In instances when the release date differs from the date of the document itself, that fact is shown in the textnote. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy: Remarks are checked against an audio recording, and signed documents are checked against the original. Textnotes and cross references have been provided by the editors for purposes of identification or clarity. Speeches were delivered in Washington, DC, unless indicated. The times noted are local times. All materials that are printed in full text in the book have been indexed in the subject and name indexes and listed in the document categories list.

The Public Papers of the Presidents series was begun in 1957 in response to a recommendation of the National Historical Publications Commission. An extensive compilation of messages and papers of the Presidents covering the period 1789 to 1897 was assembled by James D. Richardson and published under congressional authority between 1896 and 1899. Since then, various private compilations have been issued, but there was no uniform publication comparable to the Congressional Record or the United States Supreme Court Reports. Many Presidential papers could be found only in the form of mimeographed White House releases or as reported in the press. The Commission therefore recommended the establishment of an official series in which Presidential writings, addresses, and remarks of a public nature could be made available.

The Commission's recommendation was incorporated in regulations of the Administrative Committee of the Federal Register, issued under section 6 of the Federal Register Act (44 U.S.C. 1506), which may be found in title 1, part 10, of the Code of Federal Regulations.

A companion publication to the Public Papers series, the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, was begun in 1965 to provide a broader range of Presidential materials on a more timely basis to meet the needs of the contemporary reader. Beginning with the administration of Jimmy Carter, the Public Papers series expanded its coverage to include additional material as printed in the Weekly Compilation. On January 20, 2009, the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents was superseded by the Daily Compilation of Presidential Documents. The Daily Compiliation provides a listing of the President's daily schedule and meetings, when announced, and other items of general interest issued by the Office of the Press Secretary. Also included are lists of the President's nominations submitted to the Senate, materials released by the Office of the Press Secretary that are not printed in full text in the book, and proclamations, Executive orders, and other Presidential documents released by the Office of the Press Secretary and published in the *Federal Register*. This information appears in the appendixes at the end of the book.

Volumes covering the administrations of Presidents Herbert Hoover, Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Richard Nixon, Gerald R. Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, William J. Clinton, and George W. Bush are also included in the Public Papers series.

The Public Papers of the Presidents publication program is under the direction of Michael L. White, Managing Editor, Office of the Federal Register. The series is produced by the Presidential and Legislative Publications Unit. The Chief Editor of this book was Stacey A. Mulligan, assisted by Lois M. Davis, Michael J. Forcina, Joseph Frankovic, Gwendolyn J. Henderson, Diane Hiltabidle, Alfred Jones, Joshua H. Liberatore, Heather N. McDaniel, Amelia E. Otovo, D. Gregory Perrin, Matthew R. Regan, and Joseph Vetter.

The frontispiece and photographs used in the portfolio were supplied by the White House Photo Office. The typography and design of the book were developed by the Government Printing Office under the direction of Robert C. Tapella, Public Printer.

Raymond A. Mosley
Director of the Federal Register

David S. Ferriero
Archivist of the United States

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Secretary of Defense	Robert M. Gates
Attorney General	Eric H. Holder, Jr.
Secretary of the Interior	Kenneth L. Salazar
Secretary of Agriculture	Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Commerce	Gary F. Locke
Secretary of Labor	Hilda L. Solis
Secretary of Health and Human Services	Kathleen Sebelius
Secretary of Housing and Urban Development	Shaun L.S. Donovan
Secretary of Transportation	Raymond H. LaHood
Secretary of Energy	Steven Chu
Secretary of Education	Arne Duncan
Secretary of Veterans Affairs	Eric K. Shinseki
Secretary of Homeland Security	Janet A. Napolitano
Chief of Staff	Rahm I. Emmanuel
Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency	Lisa P. Jackson
United States Trade Representative	Ronald Kirk

Director of the Office of Management and Budget	Peter R. Orzag
Chair of the Council of Economic Advisers	Christina D. Romer
United States Representative to the United Nations	Susan E. Rice

Administration of Barack Obama

2009

Inaugural Address
January 20, 2009

My fellow citizens, I stand here today humbled by the task before us, grateful for the trust you have bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors. I thank President Bush for his service to our Nation, as well as the generosity and cooperation he has shown throughout this transition.

Forty-four Americans have now taken the Presidential oath. The words have been spoken during rising tides of prosperity and the still waters of peace. Yet every so often, the oath is taken amidst gathering clouds and raging storms. At these moments, America has carried on not simply because of the skill or vision of those in high office, but because we the people have remained faithful to the ideals of our forbearers and true to our founding documents.

So it has been; so it must be with this generation of Americans. That we are in the midst of crisis is now well understood. Our Nation is at war against a far-reaching network of violence and hatred. Our economy is badly weakened, a consequence of greed and irresponsibility on the part of some, but also our collective failure to make hard choices and prepare the Nation for a new age. Homes have been lost, jobs shed, businesses shuttered. Our health care is too costly. Our schools fail too many. And each day brings further evidence that the ways we use energy strengthen our adversaries and threaten our planet.

These are the indicators of crisis, subject to data and statistics. Less measurable but no less profound is a sapping of confidence across our land, a nagging fear that America's decline is inevitable, that the next generation must lower its sights. Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real. They are serious, and they are many. They will not be met easily or in a short span of time. But know this, America: They will be met.

On this day, we gather because we have chosen hope over fear, unity of purpose over conflict and discord. On this day, we come to proclaim an end to the petty grievances and false promises, the recriminations and worn-out dogmas that for far too long have strangled our politics.

We remain a young nation, but in the words of Scripture, the time has come to set aside childish things. The time has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit, to choose our better history, to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea passed on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness.

In reaffirming the greatness of our Nation, we understand that greatness is never a given. It must be earned. Our journey has never been one of shortcuts or settling for less. It has not been the path for the fainthearted, for those who prefer leisure over work or seek only the pleasures of riches and fame. Rather, it has been the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things—some celebrated, but more often men and women obscure in their labor—who have carried us up the long, rugged path toward prosperity and freedom.

For us, they packed up their few worldly possessions and traveled across oceans in search of a new life. For us, they toiled in sweatshops and settled the West, endured the lash of the whip, and plowed the hard Earth. For us, they fought and died in places like Concord and Gettysburg, Normandy and Khe Sanh.

Time and again, these men and women struggled and sacrificed and worked 'til their hands were raw so that we might live a better life. They saw America as bigger than the sum of our individual ambitions, greater than all the differences of birth or wealth or faction.

This is the journey we continue today. We remain the most prosperous, powerful nation on Earth. Our workers are no less productive than when this crisis began. Our minds are no less inventive. Our goods and services no less needed than they were last week or last month or last year. Our capacity remains undiminished. But our time of standing pat, of protecting narrow

interests and putting off unpleasant decisions, that time has surely passed. Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin again the work of remaking America.

For everywhere we look, there is work to be done. The state of the economy calls for action, bold and swift, and we will act not only to create new jobs but to lay a new foundation for growth. We will build the roads and bridges, the electric grids and digital lines that feed our commerce and bind us together. We will restore science to its rightful place and wield technology's wonders to raise health care's quality and lower its cost. We will harness the sun and the winds and the soil to fuel our cars and run our factories. And we will transform our schools and colleges and universities to meet the demands of a new age. All this we can do. All this we will do.

Now, there are some who question the scale of our ambitions, who suggest that our system cannot tolerate too many big plans. Their memories are short, for they have forgotten what this country has already done, what free men and women can achieve when imagination is joined to common purpose and necessity to courage.

What the cynics fail to understand is that the ground has shifted beneath them, that the stale political arguments that have consumed us for so long no longer apply. The question we ask today is not whether our Government is too big or too small, but whether it works; whether it helps families find jobs at a decent wage, care they can afford, a retirement that is dignified. Where the answer is yes, we intend to move forward. Where the answer is no, programs will end. And those of us who manage the public's dollars will be held to account to spend wisely, reform bad habits, and do our business in the light of day, because only then can we restore the vital trust between a people and their government.

Nor is the question before us whether the market is a force for good or ill. Its power to generate wealth and expand freedom is unmatched. But this crisis has reminded us that without a watchful eye, the market can spin out of control. The Nation cannot prosper long when it favors only the prosperous. The success of our economy has always depended not just on the size of our gross domestic product, but on the reach of our prosperity, on our ability to extend opportunity to every willing heart, not out of charity, but because it is the surest route to our common good.

As for our common defense, we reject as false the choice between our safety and our ideals. Our Founding Fathers, faced with perils that we can scarcely imagine, drafted a charter to assure the rule of law and the rights of man, a charter expanded by the blood of generations. Those ideals still light the world, and we will not give them up for expedience's sake. And so to all the other peoples and governments who are watching today, from the grandest capitals to the small village where my father was born, know that America is a friend of each nation and every man, woman, and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity, and we are ready to lead once more.

Recall that earlier generations faced down fascism and communism not just with missiles and tanks but with sturdy alliances and enduring convictions. They understood that our power alone cannot protect us, nor does it entitle us to do as we please. Instead, they knew that our power grows through its prudent use. Our security emanates from the justness of our cause, the force of our example, the tempering qualities of humility and restraint.

We are the keepers of this legacy. Guided by these principles once more, we can meet those new threats that demand even greater effort, even greater cooperation and understanding between nations. We will begin to responsibly leave Iraq to its people and forge a hard-earned peace in Afghanistan. With old friends and former foes, we will work tirelessly to lessen the nuclear threat and roll back the specter of a warming planet. We will not apologize for our way of life, nor will we waver in its defense. And for those who seek to advance their aims by inducing terror and slaughtering innocents, we say to you now that our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken. You cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you.

For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness. We are a nation of Christians and Muslims, Jews and Hindus and

nonbelievers. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth. And because we have tasted the bitter swill of civil war and segregation and emerged from that dark chapter stronger and more united, we cannot help but believe that the old hatreds shall someday pass, that the lines of tribe shall soon dissolve; that as the world grows smaller, our common humanity shall reveal itself, and that America must play its role in ushering in a new era of peace.

To the Muslim world, we seek a new way forward based on mutual interest and mutual respect. To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict or blame their society's ills on the West, know that your people will judge you on what you can build, not what you destroy. To those who cling to power through corruption and deceit and the silencing of dissent, know that you are on the wrong side of history, but that we will extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist.

To the people of poor nations, we pledge to work alongside you to make your farms flourish and let clean waters flow, to nourish starved bodies and feed hungry minds. And to those nations like ours that enjoy relative plenty, we say we can no longer afford indifference to suffering outside our borders, nor can we consume the world's resources without regard to effect, for the world has changed, and we must change with it.

As we consider the road that unfolds before us, we remember with humble gratitude those brave Americans who, at this very hour, patrol far-off deserts and distant mountains. They have something to tell us today, just as the fallen heroes who lie in Arlington whisper through the ages. We honor them not only because they are guardians of our liberty, but because they embody the spirit of service, a willingness to find meaning in something greater than themselves. And yet at this moment, a moment that will define a generation, it is precisely this spirit that must inhabit us all.

For as much as Government can do and must do, it is ultimately the faith and determination of the American people upon which this Nation relies. It is the kindness to take in a stranger when the levees break, the selflessness of workers who would rather cut their hours than see a friend lose their job, which sees us through our darkest hours. It is the firefighter's courage to storm a stairway filled with smoke, but also a parent's willingness to nurture a child, that finally decides our fate.

Our challenges may be new. The instruments with which we meet them may be new. But those values upon which our success depends—honesty and hard work, courage and fair play, tolerance and curiosity, loyalty and patriotism—these things are old. These things are true. They have been the quiet force of progress throughout our history. What is demanded then is a return to these truths. What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility, a recognition on the part of every American that we have duties to ourselves, our Nation, and the world. Duties that we do not grudgingly accept but, rather, seize gladly, firm in the knowledge that there is nothing so satisfying to the spirit, so defining of our character, than giving our all to a difficult task.

This is the price and the promise of citizenship. This is the source of our confidence, the knowledge that God calls on us to shape an uncertain destiny. This is the meaning of our liberty and our creed; why men and women and children of every race and every faith can join in celebration across this magnificent Mall, and why a man whose father less than 60 years ago might not have been served at a local restaurant can now stand before you to take a most sacred oath.

So let us mark this day with remembrance of who we are and how far we have traveled. In the year of America's birth, in the coldest of months, a small band of patriots huddled by dying campfires on the shores of an icy river. The Capital was abandoned. The enemy was advancing. The snow was stained with blood. At a moment when the outcome of our Revolution was most in doubt, the Father of our Nation ordered these words be read to the people:

"Let it be told to the future world . . . that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive . . . that the city and the country, alarmed at one common danger, came forth to meet [it]."

America, in the face of our common dangers, in this winter of our hardship, let us remember these timeless words. With hope and virtue, let us brave once more the icy currents and endure what storms may come. Let it be said by our children's children that when we were tested, we refused to let this journey end; that we did not turn back, nor did we falter. And with eyes fixed on the horizon and God's grace upon us, we carried forth that great gift of freedom and delivered it safely to future generations.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 12 p.m. at the West Front of the U.S. Capitol. Prior to the address, Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr., administered the oath of office. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 21.

Remarks to White House Senior Staff
January 21, 2009

Hello, everybody. Please be seated. Still getting used to that whole thing. [*Laughter*] Please be seated. Thank you so much. I wanted to get everyone together on the first day to welcome you to the White House.

From our vantage point yesterday, you couldn't help but be inspired by the sight of Americans as far as the eye could see. They were there because they believe this is a moment of great change in America, a time for reinvigorating our democracy and remaking our country. They've entrusted all of us with a great responsibility. And so today I'd like to talk with you about our responsibility to keep that trust.

In a few minutes, I'm going to be issuing some of the first Executive orders and directives of my Presidency. And these steps are aimed at establishing firm rules of the road for my administration and all who serve in it and to help restore that faith in Government, without which we cannot deliver the changes we were sent here to make, from rebuilding our economy and ensuring that anyone who is willing to work can find a well-paying job to protecting and defending the United States and promoting peace and security.

However long we are keepers of the public trust, we should never forget that we are here as public servants, and public service is a privilege. It's not about advantaging yourself. It's not about advancing your friends or your corporate clients. It's not about advancing an ideological agenda or the special interests of any organization. Public service is, simply and absolutely, about advancing the interests of Americans.

The men and women in this room understand this, and that's why you're here. All of you are committed to building a more responsible, more accountable Government. And part of what that means is making sure that we're spending precious tax dollars wisely and cutting costs wherever possible.

During this period of economic emergency, families are tightening their belts, and so should Washington. And that's why I am instituting a pay freeze on the salaries of my senior White House staff. Some of the people in this room will be impacted by the pay freeze, and I want you to know that I appreciate your willingness to agree to it, recognizing that it's what's required of you at this moment. It's a mark of your commitment to public service.

But the American people deserve more than simply an assurance that those who are coming to Washington will serve their interests. They also deserve to know that there are rules on the books to keep it that way. They deserve a Government that is truly of, by, and for the people. As I often said during the campaign, we need to make the White House the people's house. And we need to close the revolving door that lets lobbyists come into Government freely and lets them use their time in public service as a way to promote their own interests over the interests of the American people when they leave.

So today we are taking a major step towards fulfilling this campaign promise. The

Executive order on ethics I will sign shortly represents a clean break from business as usual. As of today, lobbyists will be subject to stricter limits than under any other administration in history. If you are a lobbyist entering my administration, you will not be able to work on matters you lobbied on or in the agencies you lobbied during the previous 2 years. When you leave Government, you will not be able to lobby my administration for as long as I am President. And there will be a ban on gifts by lobbyists to anyone serving in the administration as well.

Now, the new rules on lobbying alone, no matter how tough, are not enough to fix a broken system in Washington. That's why I'm also setting new rules that govern not just lobbyists, but all those who have been selected to serve in my administration.

If you are enlisting in Government service, you will have to commit in writing to rules limiting your role for 2 years in matters involving people you used to work with and barring you from any attempt to influence your former Government colleagues for 2 years after you leave. And you will receive an ethics briefing on what is required of you to make sure that our Government is serving the people's interests and nobody else's, a briefing, I'm proud to say, I was the first member of this administration to receive last week.

But the way to make a Government responsible is not simply to enlist the services of responsible men and women or to sign laws that ensure that they never stray. The way to make Government responsible is to hold it accountable. And the way to make Government accountable is to make it transparent so that the American people can know exactly what decisions are being made, how they're being made, and whether their interests are being well served.

The directives I am giving my administration today on how to interpret the Freedom of Information Act will do just that. For a long time now, there's been too much secrecy in this city. The old rules said that if there was a defensible argument for not disclosing something to the American people, then it should not be disclosed. That era is now over. Starting today, every agency and department should know that this administration stands on the side not of those who seek to withhold information but those who seek to make it known.

To be sure, issues like personal privacy and national security must be treated with the care they demand. But the mere fact that you have the legal power to keep something secret does not mean you should always use it. The Freedom of Information Act is perhaps the most powerful instrument we have for making our Government honest and transparent, and of holding it accountable. And I expect members of my administration not simply to live up to the letter but also the spirit of this law.

I will also hold myself as President to a new standard of openness. Going forward, anytime the American people want to know something that I or a former President wants to withhold, we will have to consult with the Attorney General and the White House Counsel, whose business it is to ensure compliance with the rule of law. Information will not be withheld just because I say so. It will be withheld because a separate authority believes my request is well grounded in the Constitution.

Let me say it as simply as I can: Transparency and the rule of law will be the touchstones of this Presidency.

Our commitment to openness means more than simply informing the American people about how decisions are made. It means recognizing that Government does not have all the answers, and that public officials need to draw on what citizens know. And that's why, as of today, I'm directing members of my administration to find new ways of tapping the knowledge and experience of ordinary Americans—scientists and civic leaders, educators and entrepreneurs—because the way to solve the problem of our time is—the way to solve the problems of our time, as one nation, is by involving the American people in shaping the policies that affect their lives.

The Executive orders and directives I'm issuing today will not by themselves make Government as honest and transparent as it needs to be. And they do not go as far as we need to go towards restoring accountability and fiscal restraint in Washington. But these historic measures do mark the beginning of a new era of

openness in our country. And I will, I hope, do something to make Government trustworthy in the eyes of the American people in the days and weeks, months, and years to come. That's a pretty good place to start.

Thank you very much. All right.

[*At this point, the President signed Executive Order 13489, Presidential Records; Executive Order 13490, Ethics Commitments by Executive Branch Personnel; and memoranda on the Freedom of Information Act, a pay freeze for senior White House staff, and transparency and open Government.*]

Thank you. Lisa, our schedule now? The swearing-in is going to be taking place, and the Vice President is going to be carrying that out? Okay.

Before the Vice President does that, let me just say how proud I am of all of you. This is an extraordinary collection of talent, and you inspire great confidence in me. I think the more the American people get to know you, the more you will inspire great confidence in the American people. All of you have made extraordinary sacrifices to be here. Many of you have brought your families here; they're making extraordinary sacrifices.

But what a moment we're in. What an opportunity we have to change this country. And for those of us who have been in public life before, these kinds of moments come around just every so often. The American people are really counting on us now. Let's make sure we take advantage of it. I know you will. So thank you for your commitment.

Joe, do you want to administer the oath?

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:18 p.m. in the Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Attorney General-designate Eric H. Holder, Jr.; White House Counsel Gregory B. Craig; and White House Staff Secretary Lisa Brown. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden. The related Executive orders and memorandum are listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on a Meeting on the Situation in Iraq
January 21, 2009

This afternoon I met with our Ambassador to Iraq, the commander in Iraq, and the overall theater commander in the region in order to get a full update on the situation in Iraq. Key members of my Cabinet and senior national security officials also participated in this meeting.

The meeting was productive, and I very much appreciated receiving assessments from these experienced and dedicated individuals. During the discussion, I asked the military leadership to engage in additional planning necessary to execute a responsible military drawdown from Iraq.

In the coming days and weeks, I will also visit the Department of Defense to consult with the Joint Chiefs on these issues, and we will undertake a full review of the situation in Afghanistan in order to develop a comprehensive policy for the entire region.

NOTE: The statement referred to Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Forces—Iraq; and Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commander, U.S. Central Command.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Retired Military Officers
January 22, 2009

The President. This first Executive order that we are signing: "By the authority vested in me as President of the—President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of

America, in order to effect the appropriate disposition of individuals currently detained by the Department of Defense at Guantanamo, and promptly to close the detention facility at Guantanamo, consistent with the national security and foreign policy interests of the United States and the interest of justice, I hereby order."

And we then provide the process whereby Guantanamo will be closed no later than one year from now. We will be—is there a separate Executive order, Greg, with respect to how we're going to dispose of the detainees? Is that——

White House Counsel Gregory B. Craig. We're going to set up a process.

The President. We will be setting up a process whereby this is going to be taking place.

The individuals who are standing behind me represent flag officers who came to both Joe and myself and all the candidates and made a passionate plea that we restore the standards of due process and the core constitutional values that have made this country great, even in the midst of war, even in dealing with terrorism. They've made an extraordinary impression on me. They are outstanding Americans who have fought and defended this country. And for them to fight on behalf of our constitutional ideals and values, I think, is exceptional, so I wanted to make sure that they were here to witness the signing of this Executive order.

[*At this point, the President signed Executive Order 13492, Review and Disposition of Individuals Detained at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base and Closure of Detention Facilities.*]

The President. There we go.

White House staff member. Thank you everybody——

Vice President Joe Biden. We got one more.

The President. There are three of these.

Vice President Biden. Several more. [*Laughter*]

The President. This one: "By the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, in order to improve the effectiveness of human intelligence gathering and to promote the safe, lawful and humane treatment of individuals in United States custody and of United States personnel who are detained in armed conflicts, and to ensure compliance with the treaty obligations of the United States, including the Geneva Convention, and to take care that the laws of the United States are faithfully executed"—I issue this following Executive order that effectively ensures that anybody detained by the United States for now is going to be—any interrogations taking place are going to have to abide by the Army Field Manual. We believe that the Army Field Manual reflects the best judgment of our military, that we can abide by a rule that says we don't torture, but that we can still effectively obtain the intelligence that we need.

This is me following through on not just a commitment I made during the campaign, but I think a—an understanding that dates back to our Founding Fathers, that we are willing to observe core standards of conduct, not just when it's easy but also when it's hard.

And so, with that, let me sign the next Executive order.

[*The President signed Executive Order 13491, Ensuring Lawful Interrogations.*]

The President. There you go.

Two more; I got two more.

What we're doing here is to set up a Special Interagency Task Force on Detainee Disposition. It's going to be made up of the Attorney General, Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, Secretary of Homeland Security, Director of National Intelligence, the Director of the CIA, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and any other officers that we may need.

They are going to provide me with information in terms of how we are able to deal in the disposition of some of the detainees that may be currently in Guantanamo that we cannot transfer to other countries, who could pose a serious danger to the United States, but we cannot try because of various problems related to evidence in a Article III court.

So this task force is going to provide us with a series of recommendations on that. Is that correct, Greg?

White House Counsel Craig. That's right, and detainee policy going forward.

The President. And detainee policy going forward, so that we don't find ourselves in these kinds of situations in the future.

White House Counsel Craig. And give clear guidance to the military——

The President. And that we are providing clear guidance to our military in terms of how to deal with it. Okay.

[*The President signed Executive Order 13493, Review of Detention Policy Options.*]

The President. There we go.

And finally, this is a much more specific issue related to the current detention of Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri. Some of you are familiar with the al-Marri case. You have a legal resident who has been detained. He is clearly a dangerous individual. His case is currently before the Supreme Court. We have asked for a delay in dealing—going before the Supreme Court and dealing with this case so that we can properly review the evidence against him and the various policies that have been presented up until this time. So:

[*The President signed a memorandum on Review of the Detention of Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri.*]

The President. All right, with those three Executive orders and this memorandum, the message that we are sending around the world is that the United States intends to prosecute the ongoing struggle against violence and terrorism, and we are going to do so vigilantly, we are going to do so effectively, and we are going to do so in a manner that is consistent with our values and our ideals. And all of the individuals who are standing behind me, as well as, I think, the American people, understand that we are not, as I said in the Inauguration, going to continue with a false choice between our safety and our ideals. We think that it is precisely our ideals that give us the strength and the moral high ground to be able to effectively deal with the unthinking violence that you see emanating from terrorist organizations around the world.

We intend to win this fight. We're going to win it on our terms.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:01 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to suspected Al Qaida operative Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri, currently in U.S. military custody as an enemy combatant. The related Executive orders and memorandum are listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the State Department
January 22, 2009

Thank you so much. It is my privilege to come here and to pay tribute to all of you, the talented men and women of the State Department. I've given you an early gift, Hillary Clinton. You—[*applause*].

In her you will have a Secretary of State who has my full confidence, and I want to thank Chairman Kerry and the Senate for acting swiftly to confirm her, because we have no time to lose.

My appearance today, as has been noted, underscores my commitment to the importance of diplomacy and renewing American leadership, and it gives me an opportunity to thank you for the services that you perform every single day. Sometimes I think the American public doesn't fully understand the sacrifices that you and your families make, the dedication that is involved in you carrying on your tasks day in, day out. And I know I speak for Joe Biden, as well as everybody else on this stage, when we tell you that we are proud of you.

You are carrying on a vital task in the safety and security of the American people. And part of what we want to do is to make sure that everybody understands that the State Department is going to be absolutely critical to our success in the years to come. And you individually are going to be critical to our success in

the years to come. And we want to send a signal to all kinds of young people who may be thinking about the Foreign Service that they are going to be critical in terms of projecting not just America's power, but also America's values and America's ideals.

The inheritance of our young century demands a new era of American leadership. We must recognize that America's strength comes not just from the might of our arms or the scale of our wealth, but from our enduring values. And for the sake of our national security and the common aspirations of people around the globe, this era has to begin now.

This morning I signed three Executive orders. First, I can say without exception or equivocation that the United States will not torture. Second, we will close the Guantanamo Bay detention camp and determine how to deal with those who have been held there. And third, we will immediately undertake a comprehensive review to determine how to hold and try terrorism suspects to best protect our Nation and the rule of law.

The world needs to understand that America will be unyielding in its defense of its security and relentless in its pursuit of those who would carry out terrorism or threaten the United States. And that's why, in this twilight struggle, we need a durable framework. The orders that I signed today should send an unmistakable signal that our actions in defense of liberty will be just as our cause, and that we the people will uphold our fundamental values as vigilantly as we protect our security. Once again, America's moral example must be the bedrock and the beacon of our global leadership.

We are confronted by extraordinary, complex, and interconnected global challenges: the war on terror, sectarian division, and the spread of deadly technology. We did not ask for the burden that history has asked us to bear, but Americans will bear it. We must bear it. Progress will not come quickly or easily, nor can we promise to right every single wrong around the world.

But we can pledge to use all elements of American power to protect our people and to promote our interests and ideals, starting with principled, focused, and sustained American diplomacy. To carry forward that effort, we are going to be calling on your hard work and perseverance in the months and years to come. Given the urgency and complexity of the challenges we face, and to convey our seriousness of purpose, Secretary Clinton and I are also calling upon the two distinguished Americans standing with us today.

It will be the policy of my administration to actively and aggressively seek a lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as Israel and its Arab neighbors. To help us pursue these goals, Secretary Clinton and I have asked George Mitchell to serve as Special Envoy for Middle East Peace.

George is renowned in this country and around the world for his negotiating skill. He brings international stature and a lifetime of service. His years in the Senate were marked by strong leadership and bipartisan achievement. His efforts on behalf of peace in Northern Ireland were indispensable in reconciling a painful and protracted conflict. Time and again in public service and private life, he has acted with skill and acted with integrity. He will be fully empowered at the negotiating table, and he will sustain our focus on the goal of peace.

No one doubts the difficulty of the road ahead, and George outlined some of those difficulties. The tragic violence in Gaza and southern Israel offers a sobering reminder of the challenges at hand and the setbacks that will inevitably come.

It must also instill in us, though, a sense of urgency, as history shows us that strong and sustained American engagement can bridge divides and build the capacity that supports progress. And that is why we will be sending George to the region as soon as possible to help the parties ensure that the cease-fire that has been achieved is made durable and sustainable.

Let me be clear: America is committed to Israel's security, and we will always support Israel's right to defend itself against legitimate threats. For years, Hamas has launched thousands of rockets at innocent Israeli citizens. No democracy can tolerate such danger to its people, nor should the international community. And neither should the Palestinian people

themselves, whose interests are only set back by acts of terror.

To be a genuine party to peace, the Quartet has made it clear that Hamas must meet clear conditions: recognize Israel's right to exist, renounce violence, and abide by past agreements.

Going forward, the outline for a durable cease-fire is clear. Hamas must end its rocket fire. Israel will complete the withdrawal of its forces from Gaza. The United States and our partners will support a credible anti-smuggling and interdiction regime so that Hamas cannot rearm.

Yesterday I spoke to President Mubarak and expressed my appreciation for the important role that Egypt played in achieving a cease-fire, and we look forward to Egypt's continued leadership and partnership in laying a foundation for a broader peace through a commitment to end smuggling from within its borders.

Now, just as the terror of rocket fire aimed at innocent Israelis is intolerable, so too is a future without hope for the Palestinians. I was deeply concerned by the loss of Palestinian and Israeli life in recent days and by the substantial suffering and humanitarian needs in Gaza. Our hearts go out to Palestinian civilians who are in need of immediate food, clean water, and basic medical care, and who have faced suffocating poverty for far too long.

Now we must extend a hand of opportunity to those who seek peace. As part of a lasting cease-fire, Gaza's border crossings should be opened to allow the flow of aid and commerce, with an appropriate monitoring regime with the international and Palestinian Authority participating.

Relief efforts must be able to reach innocent Palestinians who depend on them. The United States will fully support an international donors conference to seek short-term humanitarian assistance and long-term reconstruction for the Palestinian economy. This assistance will be provided to, and guided by, the Palestinian Authority.

Lasting peace requires more than a long cease-fire. And that's why I will sustain an active commitment to seek two states living side by side in peace and security. Senator Mitchell will carry forward this commitment, as well as the effort to help Israel reach a broader peace with the Arab world that recognizes its rightful place in the community of nations.

I should add that the Arab Peace Initiative contains constructive elements that could help advance these efforts. Now is the time for Arab States to act on the initiatives promised by supporting the Palestinian Government under President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad, taking steps towards normalizing relations with Israel, and by standing up to extremism that threatens us all.

Jordan's constructive role in training Palestinian security forces and nurturing its relations with Israel provide a model for these efforts. And going forward, we must make it clear to all countries in the region that external support for terrorist organizations must stop.

Another urgent threat to global security is the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This is the central front in our enduring struggle against terrorism and extremism. There, as in the Middle East, we must understand that we cannot deal with our problems in isolation. There is no answer in Afghanistan that does not confront the Al Qaida and Taliban bases along the border, and there will be no lasting peace unless we expand spheres of opportunity for the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan. This is truly an international challenge of the highest order.

That's why Secretary Clinton and I are naming Ambassador Richard Holbrooke to be Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. Ambassador Holbrooke is one of the most talented diplomats of his generation. Over several decades, he served on different continents and as an outstanding Ambassador to the United Nations. He has strengthened ties with our allies, tackled the toughest negotiations, and helped deliver a hard-earned peace as an architect of the Dayton Accords. He will help lead our effort to forge and implement a strategic and sustainable approach to this critical region.

The American people and the international community must understand that the situation is perilous and progress will take time.

Violence is up dramatically in Afghanistan. A deadly insurgency has taken deep root. The opium trade is far and away the largest in the world. The Afghan Government has been unable to deliver basic services. Al Qaida and the Taliban strike from bases embedded in rugged, tribal terrain along the Pakistani border. And while we have yet to see another attack on our soil since 9/11, Al Qaida terrorists remain at large and remain plotting.

Going forward, we must set clear priorities in pursuit of achievable goals that contribute to our collective security. My administration is committed to refocusing attention and resources on Afghanistan and Pakistan and to spending those resources wisely. And that's why we are pursuing a careful review of our policy. We will seek stronger partnerships with the governments of the region, sustained cooperation with our NATO allies, deeper engagement with the Afghan and Pakistani people, and a comprehensive strategy to combat terror and extremism. We will provide the strategic guidance to meet our objectives. And we pledge to support the extraordinary Americans serving in Afghanistan, both military and civilian, with the resources that they need.

These appointments add to a team that will work with energy and purpose to meet the challenges of our time and to define a future of expanding security and opportunity. Difficult days lie ahead. As we ask more of ourselves, we will seek new partnerships and ask more of our friends, and more of people around the globe, because security in the 21st century is shared. But let there be no doubt about America's commitment to lead. We can no longer afford drift, and we can no long afford delay. Nor can we cede ground to those who seek destruction. A new era of American leadership is at hand, and the hard work has just begun.

You are going to be at the frontlines of engaging in that important work. And I am absolutely confident that with the leadership of Secretary Clinton, with wonderful envoys like Richard Holbrooke and George Mitchell, with the dedicated team that is before me today, that we are going to be able to accomplish our objectives, keep America safe, and bring better days not just to our own country, but all around the world.

Thank you very much, everyone.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:11 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, who introduced the President; Vice President Joe Biden; President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; and President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad of the Palestinian Authority. He also referred to Executive Order 13491, Ensuring Lawful Interrogations; Executive Order 13492, Review and Disposition of Individuals Detained at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base and Closure of Detention Facilities; and Executive Order 13493, Review of Detention Policy Options.

Statement on the 36th Anniversary of *Roe* v. *Wade*
January 22, 2009

On the 36th anniversary of *Roe* v. *Wade*, we are reminded that this decision not only protects women's health and reproductive freedom, but stands for a broader principle that Government should not intrude on our most private family matters. I remain committed to protecting a woman's right to choose.

While this is a sensitive and often divisive issue, no matter what our views, we are united in our determination to prevent unintended pregnancies, reduce the need for abortion, and support women and families in the choices they make. To accomplish these goals, we must work to find common ground to expand access to affordable contraception, accurate health information, and preventative services.

On this anniversary, we must also recommit ourselves more broadly to ensuring that our daughters have the same rights and opportunities as our sons: the chance to attain a world-class education; to have fulfilling careers in any industry; to be treated fairly and paid equally for their work; and to have no limits on their dreams. That is what I want for women everywhere.

Memorandum on Review of the Detention of Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri
January 22, 2009

Memorandum for the Attorney General, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and the Director of National Intelligence

Subject: Review of the Detention of Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri

I have today signed an Executive Order entitled Review and Disposition of Individuals Detained at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base and Closure of Detention Facilities ("Review and Disposition Order"), which mandates a review, coordinated by the Attorney General, of the status of all individuals that the Department of Defense is currently detaining at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, in order to effect their prompt and appropriate disposition.

For more than 5 years, the Department of Defense has detained Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri as an enemy combatant in facilities within the United States. Al-Marri is the only individual the Department of Defense is currently holding as an enemy combatant within the United States.

Because he is not held at Guantanamo Bay, al-Marri is not covered by the review mandated in the Review and Disposition Order. Yet it is equally in the interests of the United States that the executive branch undertake a prompt and thorough review of the factual and legal basis for al-Marri's continued detention, and identify and thoroughly evaluate alternative dispositions.

Accordingly, I direct that a review of al-Marri's status ("Review") commence immediately. The Review shall be conducted with the full cooperation and participation of:

(1) the Attorney General, who shall coordinate the Review;
(2) the Secretary of Defense;
(3) the Secretary of State;
(4) the Secretary of Homeland Security;
(5) the Director of National Intelligence;
(6) the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; and
(7) other officers or full-time or permanent part-time employees of the United States, including employees with intelligence, counterterrorism, military, and legal expertise, as determined by the Attorney General with the concurrence of the head of the department or agency concerned.

The Review shall expeditiously determine the disposition options with respect to al-Marri and shall pursue such disposition as is appropriate, based upon the principles set forth in the Review and Disposition Order, including, in particular, sections 4(c) and 5 thereof.

This memorandum is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity by a party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities or entities, its officers or employees, or any other person.

BARACK OBAMA

Statement on the Appointment of Kirsten Gillibrand as Senator for New York
January 23, 2009

Governor Paterson made a wonderful choice in appointing Kirsten Gillibrand to fill Secretary Clinton's seat in the United States Senate. I am confident that she will continue Secretary Clinton's distinguished service to the people of New York and to our country.

During her career, Kirsten has been a strong voice for transparency and reform in government and shares the belief that government should be open, accessible and work for all of our citizens. In Congress and as special counsel for the Department of Housing and

Urban Development, she worked to strengthen public and private partnerships to invest in infrastructure and New York's economy.

At this time of great challenge, I know that Kirsten has the integrity, character, and dedication to public service to help us achieve our greatest goals.

NOTE: The statement referred to Gov. David A. Paterson of New York; and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

The President's Weekly Address
January 24, 2009

We begin this year and this administration in the midst of an unprecedented crisis that calls for unprecedented action. Just this week we saw more people file for unemployment than at any time in the last 26 years. And experts agree that if nothing is done, the unemployment rate could reach double digits; our economy could fall a trillion dollars short of its full capacity, which translates into more than $12,000 in lost income for a family of four; and we could lose a generation of potential as more young Americans are forced to forego college dreams or the chance to train for the jobs of the future.

In short, if we do not act boldly and swiftly, a bad situation could become dramatically worse. That is why I've proposed an American recovery and reinvestment plan, to immediately jump-start job creation, as well as long-term economic growth.

I'm pleased to say that both parties in Congress are already hard at work on this plan, and I hope to sign it into law in less than a month. It's a plan that will save or create 3 to 4 million jobs over the next few years, and one that recognizes both the paradox and the promise of this moment: the fact that there are millions of Americans trying to find work, even as all around the country there's so much work to be done.

That's why this is not just a short-term program to boost employment, it's one that will invest in our most important priorities, like energy and education, health care and a new infrastructure that are necessary to keep us strong and competitive in the 21st century.

Today I'd like to talk specifically about the progress we expect to make in each of these areas. To accelerate the creation of a clean energy economy, we will double our capacity to generate alternative sources of energy like wind, solar, and biofuels over the next 3 years. We'll begin to build a new electricity grid that lay down more than 3,000 miles of transmission lines to convey this new energy from coast to coast.

We'll save taxpayers $2 billion a year by making 75 percent of Federal buildings more energy efficient and save the average working family $350 on their energy bills by weatherizing 2.5 million homes.

To lower health care costs, cut medical errors, and improve care, we'll computerize the Nation's health records in 5 years, saving billions of dollars in health care costs and countless lives. And we'll protect health insurance for more than 8 million Americans who are in danger of losing their coverage during this economic downturn.

To ensure our children can compete and succeed in this new economy, we'll renovate and modernize 10,000 schools, building state-of-the-art classrooms, libraries, and labs, to improve learning for over 5 million students. We'll invest more in Pell grants to make college affordable for 7 million more students, provide a $2,500 college tax credit to 4 million students, and triple the number of fellowships in science to help spur the next generation of innovation.

Finally, we will rebuild and retrofit America to meet the demands of the 21st century. That means repairing and modernizing thousands of miles of America's roadways and providing new mass transit options for millions of Americans. It means protecting America by securing 90 major ports and creating a better communications network for local law enforcement and public safety officials in the event of an emergency. And it means expanding broadband access to millions of Americans, so business can compete on a level playing field, wherever they're located.

I know that some are skeptical about the size and scale of this recovery plan. I understand that skepticism, which is why this recovery plan must and will include unprecedented measures that will allow the American people to hold my administration accountable for these results. We won't just throw money at our problems, we'll invest in what works. Instead of politicians doling out money behind a veil of secrecy, decisions about where we invest will be made public and informed by independent experts whenever possible.

We'll launch an unprecedented effort to root out waste, inefficiency, and unnecessary spending in our Government. And every American will be able to see how and where we spend taxpayer dollars by going to a new website called recovery.gov.

No one policy or program will solve the challenges we face right now, nor will this crisis recede in a short period of time. But if we act now and act boldly, if we start rewarding hard work and responsibility once more, if we act as citizens and not partisans and begin again the work of remaking America, then I have faith that we will emerge from this trying time even stronger and more prosperous than we were before.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:15 p.m. on January 23 in the Library at the White House for broadcast on January 24. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 23 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on January 24.

Statement on the Mexico City Policy and Assistance for Voluntary Population Planning
January 24, 2009

It is clear that the provisions of the Mexico City Policy are unnecessarily broad and unwarranted under current law, and for the past eight years, they have undermined efforts to promote safe and effective voluntary family planning in developing countries. For these reasons, it is right for us to rescind this policy and restore critical efforts to protect and empower women and promote global economic development.

For too long, international family planning assistance has been used as a political wedge issue, the subject of a back-and-forth debate that has served only to divide us. I have no desire to continue this stale and fruitless debate.

It is time that we end the politicization of this issue. In the coming weeks, my administration will initiate a fresh conversation on family planning, working to find areas of common ground to best meet the needs of women and families at home and around the world.

I have directed my staff to reach out to those on all sides of this issue to achieve the goal of reducing unintended pregnancies. They will also work to promote safe motherhood, reduce maternal and infant mortality rates and increase educational and economic opportunities for women and girls.

In addition, I look forward to working with Congress to restore U.S. financial support for the U.N. Population Fund. By resuming funding to UNFPA, the U.S. will be joining 180 other donor nations working collaboratively to reduce poverty, improve the health of women and children, prevent HIV/AIDS, and provide family planning assistance to women in 154 countries.

Remarks on Energy
January 26, 2009

Good morning. Before I begin today's announcement, I want to say a few words about the deepening economic crisis that we've inherited and the need for urgent action.

Over the last few days, we've learned that Microsoft, Intel, United Airlines, Home Depot, Sprint Nextel, and Caterpillar are each cutting thousands of jobs. These are not just numbers on a page. As with the millions of jobs lost in 2008, these are working men and women whose families have been disrupted and whose dreams have been put on hold.

We owe it to each of them and to every single American to act with a sense of urgency and common purpose. We can't afford distractions, and we cannot afford delays, and that is why I look forward to signing an American recovery and reinvestment plan that will put millions of Americans to work and lay the foundation for stable growth that our economy needs and that our people demand. These are extraordinary times, and it calls for swift and extraordinary action.

At a time of such great challenge for America, no single issue is as fundamental to our future as energy. America's dependence on oil is one of the most serious threats that our Nation has faced. It bankrolls dictators, pays for nuclear proliferation, and funds both sides of our struggle against terrorism. It puts the American people at the mercy of shifting gas prices, stifles innovation, and sets back our ability to compete.

These urgent dangers to our national and economic security are compounded by the long-term threat of climate change, which if left unchecked could result in violent conflict, terrible storms, shrinking coastlines, and irreversible catastrophe. These are the facts, and they are well known to the American people; after all, there is nothing new about these warnings. Presidents have been sounding the alarm about energy dependence for decades. President Nixon promised to make our energy—our Nation energy independent by the end of the 1970s. When he spoke, we imported about a third of our oil; we now import more than half.

Year after year, decade after decade, we've chosen delay over decisive action. Rigid ideology has overruled sound science; special interests have overshadowed common sense; rhetoric has not led to the hard work needed to achieve results. And our leaders raise their voices each time there's a spike in gas prices only to grow quiet when the price falls at the pump.

Now America has arrived at a crossroads. Embedded in American soil and the wind and the sun, we have the resources to change. Our scientists, businesses, and workers have the capacity to move us forward. It falls on us to choose whether to risk the peril that comes with our current course or to seize the promise of energy independence. And for the sake of our security, our economy, and our planet, we must have the courage and commitment to change.

It will be the policy of my administration to reverse our dependence on foreign oil, while building a new energy economy that will create millions of jobs. We hold no illusion about the task that lies ahead. I cannot promise a quick fix; no single technology or set of regulations will get the job done. But we will commit ourselves to steady, focused, pragmatic pursuit of an America that is freed from our energy dependence and empowered by a new energy economy that puts millions of our citizens to work.

Today I'm announcing the first steps on our journey toward energy independence, as we develop new energy, set new fuel efficiency standards, and address greenhouse gas emissions. Each step begins to move us in a new direction, while giving us the tools that we need to change.

First, we must take bold action to create a new American energy economy that creates millions of jobs for our people. The American recovery and reinvestment plan before Congress places a down payment on this economy. It will put 460,000 Americans to work with clean energy investments and double the capacity to generate alternative energy over the next 3 years. It will lay down 3,000 miles of transmission lines to deliver this energy to every corner of our country. It will save taxpayers $2 billion a year by making 75 percent of Federal buildings more efficient. And it will save working families hundreds of dollars on their energy bills by weatherizing 2 million homes.

This is the boost that our economy needs, and the new beginning that our future demands. By passing the bill, Congress can act where Washington has failed to act over and

over again for 30 years. We need more than the same old empty promises. We need to show that this time it will be different. This is the time that Americans must come together on behalf of our common prosperity and security.

Second, we must ensure that the fuel-efficient cars of tomorrow are built right here in the United States of America. Increasing fuel efficiency in our cars and trucks is one of the most important steps that we can take to break our cycle of dependence on foreign oil. It will also help spark the innovation needed to ensure that our auto industry keeps pace with competitors around the world.

We will start by implementing new standards for model year 2011 so that we use less oil and families have access to cleaner, more efficient cars and trucks. This rule will be a down payment on a broader and sustained effort to reduce our dependence on foreign oil. Congress has passed legislation to increase standards to at least 35 miles per gallon by 2020. That 40 percent increase in fuel efficiency for our cars and trucks could save over 2 million barrels of oil every day, nearly the entire amount of oil that we import from the Persian Gulf.

Going forward, my administration will work on a bipartisan basis in Washington and with industry partners across the country to forge a comprehensive approach that makes our economy stronger and our Nation more secure.

Third, the Federal Government must work with, not against, States to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. California has shown bold and bipartisan leadership through its effort to forge 21st century standards, and over a dozen States have followed its lead. But instead of serving as a partner, Washington stood in their way. This refusal to lead risks the creation of a confusing and patchwork set of standards that hurts the environment and the auto industry.

The days of Washington dragging its heels are over. My administration will not deny facts; we will be guided by them. We cannot afford to pass the buck or push the burden onto the States. And that's why I'm directing the Environmental Protection Agency to immediately review the denial of the California waiver request and determine the best way forward. This will help us create incentives to develop new energy that will make us less dependent on the oil that endangers our security, our economy, and our planet.

As we move forward, we will fully take into account the unique challenges facing the American auto industry and the taxpayer dollars that now support it. And let me be clear: Our goal is not to further burden an already struggling industry; it is to help America's automakers prepare for the future. This commitment must extend beyond the short-term assistance for businesses and workers. We must help them thrive by building the cars of tomorrow and galvanizing a dynamic and viable industry for decades to come.

Finally, we will make it clear to the world that America is ready to lead. To protect our climate and our collective security, we must call together a truly global coalition. I've made it clear that we will act, but so too must the world. That's how we will deny leverage to dictators and dollars to terrorists. And that's how we will ensure that nations like China and India are doing their part, just as we are now willing to do ours.

It is time for America to lead, because this moment of peril must be turned into one of progress. If we take action, we can create new industries and revive old ones; we can open new factories and power new farms; we can lower costs and revive our economy. We can do that, and we must do that. There's much work to be done; there is much further for us to go.

But I want to be clear from the beginning of this administration that we have made our choice: America will not be held hostage to dwindling resources, hostile regimes, and a warming planet. We will not be put off from action because action is hard. Now is the time to make the tough choices. Now is the time to meet the challenge at this crossroad of history by choosing a future that is safer for our country, prosperous for our planet, and sustainable.

Those are my priorities, and they're reflected in the Executive orders that I'm about to sign. Thank you so much for being here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:33 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to memoranda on the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 and the State of California request for waiver under 42 U.S.C. 7543(b), the Clean Air Act.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With United States Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George J. Mitchell and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton
January 26, 2009

So I'm pleased to have a chance to confer with Senator Mitchell, as well as Secretary Clinton, on this initiative around the Arab-Israeli peace process. And we're fortunate to have such a talented and dedicated public servant who is willing to take on what I think everybody understands is going to be a very tough job.

The cause of peace in the Middle East is important to the United States and our national interests; it's important to me personally; it is important to Arabs and Jews; it is important to Christians and Muslims and Jews all around the world. And the charge that Senator Mitchell has is to engage vigorously and consistently in order for us to achieve genuine progress.

And when I say "progress"—not just photo ops, but progress that is concretely felt by people on the ground, so that people feel more secure in their lives, so that they feel that the hopes and dreams and aspirations of their children can be met. That is going to be our task. It is not something that we're going to be able to do overnight, but I'm absolutely confident that if the United States is engaged in a consistent way and an early—in early fashion, that we can make genuine progress.

Now, understand that Senator Mitchell is going to be fully empowered by me and fully empowered by Secretary Clinton. So when he speaks, he will be speaking for us. And I'm hopeful that during this initial trip—one of the earliest initiatives that we have taken diplomatically—that not only is he able to communicate effectively how urgent we consider the issue, but that we're also going to be able to listen and to learn and to find out what various players in the region are thinking.

And more immediately, we hope that Senator Mitchell will be able to give us some ideas in terms of how we can solidify the cease-fire, ensure Israel's security, also ensure that Palestinians in Gaza are able to get the basic necessities they need and that they can see a pathway towards long-term development that will be so critical in order for us to achieve a lasting peace.

So I'm very grateful for Senator Mitchell for doing this. I'm grateful to Secretary Clinton for her leadership in making sure this happened early. And what we're now going to do is to discuss some of the details of the trip. So unfortunately, I'm going to be kicking you out. [*Laughter*]

All right, thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:33 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House.

Statement on India's Republic Day
January 26, 2009

As the people of India and people of Indian origin in America and around the world celebrate Republic Day on January 26, I send the warmest greetings of the American people to the people of India. Together, we celebrate our shared belief in democracy, liberty, pluralism, and religious tolerance.

Our nations have built broad and vibrant partnerships in every field of human endeavor. Our rapidly growing and deepening friendship with India offers benefits to all the world's citizens as our scientists solve environmental challenges together, our doctors discover new medicines, our engineers advance our societies, our

entrepreneurs generate prosperity, our educators lay the foundation for our future generations, and our Governments work together to advance peace, prosperity, and stability around the globe.

It is our shared values that form the bedrock of a robust relationship across peoples and governments. Those values and ideals provide the strength that enables us to meet any challenge, particularly from those who use violence to try to undermine our free and open societies. As the Indian people celebrate Republic Day all across India, they should know that they have no better friend and partner than the people of the United States. It is in that spirit that I also wish Prime Minister Singh a quick recovery.

NOTE: The statement referred to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India.

Message on the Observance of the Lunar New Year
January 26, 2009

I send my warmest wishes to people across Asia, in America, and indeed around the world who are celebrating the Lunar New Year and welcoming the Year of the Ox. As they gather with their families and celebrate over meals, they welcome new beginnings and honor the enduring wisdom of their ancestors.

From the lion dances in San Francisco to festivals in Atlanta and parades in New York City and Washington, DC, Americans of Asian descent carry on the vibrant traditions of their forefathers and enrich America's cultural diversity. I wish all those celebrating the New Year to be blessed with peace, prosperity, and good health.

Remarks at a Swearing-In Ceremony for Timothy F. Geithner as Secretary of the Treasury
January 26, 2009

Thank you, please have a seat. A short time ago, the United States Senate voted to confirm Timothy Geithner as our next Secretary of the Treasury. That deserves some applause. [*Applause*] I want to thank Democratic and Republican Senators for their show of confidence in Tim, and I want to thank Tim and Carole for their willingness to serve their country at a time when that service is desperately needed.

Now, I came here tonight because, at this moment of challenge and crisis, Tim's work and the work of the entire Treasury Department must begin at once. We cannot lose a day, because every day the economic picture is darkening, here and across the globe. Just today we learned that seven major corporations will be laying off thousands more workers. This comes on top of the 2.5 million jobs we lost last year. And it will take a Secretary of the Treasury who understands this challenge and all its complexities to help lead us forward.

When Alexander Hamilton was sworn in as our first Treasury Secretary, his task was to weave together the disparate debts and economies of various States into one American system of credit and capital markets. More than two centuries later, that system is now in serious jeopardy. It has been badly weakened by an era of irresponsibility, a series of imprudent and dangerous decisions on Wall Street, and an unrelenting quest for profit with too little regard for risk, too little regulatory scrutiny, and too little accountability. The result's been a devastating loss of trust and confidence in our economy, our financial markets, and our Government. And that era must end right now, and I believe it can.

The very fact that this crisis is largely of our own making means that it is not beyond our ability to solve. Our problems are rooted in past mistakes, not our capacity for future greatness. It will take time, perhaps many years, but we can rebuild that lost trust and

confidence. We can restore opportunity and prosperity. And I'm confident that Tim, along with Larry Summers and Peter Orszag and the rest of our economic team, can help us get there.

In the coming weeks and months, we will work together to stabilize our financial system and restart the flow of credit that families and businesses depend on to get a loan, make a payroll, or buy a home. But we'll do it in a way that protects the American taxpayer and includes the highest level of transparency and oversight so that the American people can hold us accountable for results.

Together, with both parties in Congress, we will launch a recovery and reinvestment plan that saves or creates more than 3 million jobs while investing in priorities like health care, education, and energy that will make us strong in the future. And I will be working with the entire economic team and Tim to reform and modernize our outdated financial regulations so that a crisis like this cannot happen again. We'll put in place new commonsense rules of the road, and we will be vigilant in ensuring they are not bent or broken any longer.

So congratulations, Tim. You've got your work cut out for you, as I think everybody knows, but you also have my full confidence, my deepest trust, my unyielding belief that we can rise to achieve what is required of us at this moment. Our work will not be easy, and it will not be quick, but we will embrace it so that we can carry on the legacy of boundless opportunity and unmatched prosperity that has defined this Nation since our earlier days.

And before I step aside from the podium, to all the wonderful staff at Treasury, who have been laboring long and hard over the last several months and years—but particularly the last several months—I want to thank you for your dedication and your service. You've been doing yeoman's work at a time when the country needs it, and I hope with Tim at the helm, that that work will result in jobs and businesses reopening and the kinds of economic opportunity that the American people deserve.

So with that, let's get Tim sworn in.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:33 p.m. at the Department of the Treasury. In his remarks, he referred to Carole Geithner, wife of Secretary Geithner; Lawrence H. Summers, Director, National Economic Council; and Peter R. Orszag, Director, Office of Management and Budget. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary Geithner.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the House Republican Conference
January 27, 2009

Hello, everybody. We had a very constructive meeting with the House Members, Members of the Republican caucus. I'm a little bit late for my Senate colleagues—former Senate colleagues.

And the main message I have is that the statistics every day underscore the urgency of the economic situation. The American people expect action. They want us to put together a recovery package that puts people back to work, that creates investments that assure our long-term energy independence, an effective health care system, an education system that works; they want our infrastructure rebuilt, and they want it done wisely, so that we're not wasting taxpayer money.

As I explained to the Republican House caucus, and I'll explain to my former Senate colleagues, the recovery package that we've proposed and is moving its way through Congress is just one leg in a multilegged stool. We're still going to have to have much better financial regulation, we've got to get credit flowing again, we're going to have to deal with the troubled assets that many banks are still carrying and that make the—that have locked up the credit system. We're going to have to coordinate with other countries, because we now have a global problem.

I am absolutely confident that we can deal with these issues, but the key right now is to make sure that we keep politics to a minimum. There are some legitimate philosophical

differences with parts of my plan that the Republicans have, and I respect that. In some cases they may just not be as familiar with what's in the package as I would like. I don't expect a hundred percent agreement from my Republican colleagues, but I do hope that we can all put politics aside and do the American people's business right now. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:41 p.m. in the Ohio Clock Corridor at the U.S. Capitol.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Business Leaders
January 28, 2009

Thank you. Well, I want to thank Sam and David for their outstanding words. I want to thank all of you for being here today.

A few moments ago, I met with some of the leading business executives in the country. And it was a sober meeting, because these companies and the workers they employ are going through times more trying than any that we've seen in a long, long while. Just the other day, seven of our largest corporations announced they were making major job cuts. Some of the business leaders in this room have had to do the same. And yet even as we discussed the seriousness of this challenge, we left our meeting confident that we can turn our economy around.

But each of us, as Dave indicated, are going to have to do our share. Part of what led our economy to this perilous moment was a sense of irresponsibility that prevailed in Wall Street and in Washington. And that's why I called for a new era of responsibility in my Inaugural Address last week, an era where each of us chips in so that we can climb our way out of this crisis: executives and factory floor workers, educators and engineers, health care professionals and elected officials.

As we discussed in our meeting a few minutes ago, corporate America will have to accept its own responsibilities to its workers and the American public. But these executives also understand that without wise leadership in Washington, even the best-run businesses can't do as well as they might. They understand that what makes an idea sound is not whether it's Democrat or Republican, but whether it makes good economic sense for their workers and companies. And they understand that when it comes to rebuilding our economy, we don't have a moment to spare.

The businesses that are shedding jobs to stay afloat, they can't afford inaction or delay. The workers who are returning home to tell their husbands and wives and children that they no longer have a job and all those who live in fear that their job will be next on the cutting blocks, they need help now. They are looking to Washington for action, bold and swift. And that is why I hope to sign an American recovery and reinvestment plan into law in the next few weeks.

Now, most of the money that we're investing as part of this plan will get out the door immediately and go directly to job creation, generating or saving 3 to 4 million new jobs. And the vast majority of these jobs will be created in the private sector, because, as these CEOs well know, business, not government, is the engine of growth in this country.

But even as this plan puts Americans back to work, it will also make the critical investments in alternative energy, in safer roads, better health care, and modern schools that will lay the foundation for long-term growth and prosperity. And it will invest in broadband and emerging technologies, like the ones imagined and introduced to the world by people like Sam and so many of the CEOs here today, because that's how America will retain and regain its competitive edge in the 21st century.

I know that there are some who are skeptical of the size and scale of this recovery plan. And I understand that skepticism, given some of the things that have happened in this town in the past. That's why this recovery plan will include unprecedented measures that will allow the American people to hold my administration accountable. Instead of just throwing money at our problems, we'll try something

new in Washington. We will invest in what works. Instead of politicians doling out money behind a veil of secrecy, decisions about where we invest will be made public on the Internet and will be informed by independent experts whenever possible.

We will launch a sweeping effort to root out waste, inefficiency, and unnecessary spending in our Government, and every American will be able to see how and where we spend taxpayer dollars by going to a new web site called recovery.gov, because I firmly believe what Justice Louis Brandeis once said, that "sunlight is the best disinfectant," and I know that restoring transparency is not only the surest way to achieve results but also to earn back the trust in government without which we cannot deliver the changes the American people sent us here to make.

In the end, the answer to our economic troubles rests less in my hands, or in the hands of our legislators, than it does with America's workers and the businesses that employ them. They are the ones whose efforts and ideas will determine our economic destiny, just as they always have. For in the end, it's businesses, large and small, that generate the jobs, provide the salaries, and serve as the foundation on which the American people's lives and dreams depend. All we can do, those of us here in Washington, is help create a favorable climate in which workers can prosper, businesses can thrive, and our economy can grow. And that is exactly what the recovery plan I've proposed is intended to do. And that's exactly what I intend to achieve soon.

Thank you very much for being here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:35 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Samuel J. Palmisano, chairman of the board and chief executive officer, IBM Corporation; and David M. Cote, chairman and chief executive officer, Honeywell International.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates and the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Arlington, Virginia
January 28, 2009

Well, sorry we're running a little bit late. I want to, first of all, thank all the men and women in uniform who are represented here. They are the best that this country has to offer. And the first thing that I said to the Joint Chiefs in this meeting was how grateful we are for their service. The sacrifices that they and their families make are what are responsible for our freedoms that sometimes we take for granted.

And as Commander in Chief, one of my principal goals during my Presidency is going to be to make sure that they have the resources and the support that they need to carry out the critical missions that keep our Nation safe each and every day.

I had a wonderful discussion with the Joint Chiefs—we kind of lost track of time—about a range of issues facing our military as well as the threats that face this Nation, both short term and long term. We had discussions about Iraq as well as Afghanistan. We talked about some of the broader global risks that may arise and the kind of planning and coordination that's going to be required between our military and our civilian forces in order to accomplish our long-term national security objectives.

We also talked about making sure that the health of our force is always in our sights. And I know that all the Chiefs that are represented here, as well as Secretary Gates, are constantly thinking about what we need to do to make sure that people who are in uniform for the United States are getting the kinds of support that they need, and that their families are getting the support that they need. And that's something that I'm absolutely committed to, and I know that Vice President Biden is as well.

We're going to have some difficult decisions that we're going to have to make surrounding Iraq and Afghanistan, most immediately. Obviously, our efforts to continue to go after extremist organizations that would do harm to the

homeland is uppermost on our minds. I have every confidence that our military is going to do their job, and I intend to make sure that the civilian side of the ledger does its job to support what they are doing.

We have, for a long time, put enormous pressure on our military to carry out a whole set of missions, sometimes not with the sort of strategic support and the use of all aspects of American power to make sure that they're not carrying the full load. And that's something that I spoke with the Chiefs about and that I intend to change as President of the United States.

So again, my first message was to say thank you. And in addition, it's to say that you, all of you who are serving in the United States Armed Forces, are going to have my full support, and one of my duties as President is going to be to make sure that you have what you need to accomplish your missions, and we are grateful to you.

So all right, thank you, guys. I'm going to shake some more hands now.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:06 p.m. at the Pentagon.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Economic Stabilization Legislation
January 28, 2009

Last year, America lost 2.6 million jobs. On Monday alone, we learned that some of our biggest employers plan to cut another 55,000. This is a wakeup call to Washington that the American people need us to act and act immediately.

That is why I am grateful to the House of Representatives for moving the American recovery and reinvestment plan forward today. There are many numbers in this plan. It will double our capacity to generate renewable energy. It will lower the cost of health care by billions and improve its quality. It will modernize thousands of classrooms and send more kids to college. And it will put billions of dollars in immediate tax relief into the pockets of working families.

But out of all these numbers, there is one that matters most to me: This recovery plan will save or create more than 3 million new jobs over the next few years.

I can also promise that my administration will administer this recovery plan with a level of transparency and accountability never before seen in Washington. Once it is passed, every American will be able to go the web site recovery.gov and see how and where their money is being spent.

The plan now moves to the Senate, and I hope that we can continue to strengthen this plan before it gets to my desk. But what we can't do is drag our feet or allow the same partisan differences to get in our way. We must move swiftly and boldly to put Americans back to work, and that is exactly what this plan begins to do.

Remarks on Signing the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009
January 29, 2009

All right, everybody please have a seat. Well, this is a wonderful day. First of all, it is fitting that the very first bill that I sign—the Lilly Ledbetter fair pay restoration act—that it is upholding one of this Nation's founding principles, that we are all created equal and each deserve a chance to pursue our own version of happiness.

It's also fitting that we're joined today by the woman after whom this bill is named;

someone who Michelle and I have had the privilege to get to know ourselves. And it is fitting that we are joined this morning by the first woman Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi. It's appropriate that this is the first bill we do together. We could not have done it without her. Madam Speaker, thank you for your extraordinary work and to all the sponsors and Members of Congress and leadership who helped to make this day possible.

Lilly Ledbetter did not set out to be a trailblazer or a household name. She was just a good, hard worker who did her job, and she did it well, for nearly two decades before discovering that for years she was paid less than her male colleagues for doing the very same work. Over the course of her career, she lost more than $200,000 in salary and even more in pension and Social Security benefits, losses that she still feels today.

Now, Lilly could have accepted her lot and moved on. She could have decided that it wasn't worth the hassle and the harassment that would inevitably come with speaking up for what she deserved. But instead, she decided that there was a principle at stake, something worth fighting for. So she set out on a journey that would take more than 10 years, take her all the way to the Supreme Court of the United States, and lead to this day and this bill which will help others get the justice that she was denied.

Because, while this bill bears her name, Lilly knows that this story isn't just about her. It's the story of women across this country still earning just 78 cents for every dollar men earn—women of color even less—which means that today, in the year 2009, countless women are still losing thousands of dollars in salary, income, and retirement savings over the course of a lifetime.

Equal pay is by no means just a women's issue; it's a family issue. It's about parents who find themselves with less money for tuition and childcare; couples who wind up with less to retire on; households where one breadwinner is paid less than she deserves. That's the difference between affording the mortgage or not; between keeping the heat on or paying the doctor bills, or not. And in this economy, when so many folks are already working harder for less and struggling to get by, the last thing they can afford is losing part of each month's paycheck to simple and plain discrimination.

So signing this bill today is to send a clear message that making our economy work means making sure it works for everybody. That there are no second-class citizens in our workplaces; and that it's not just unfair and illegal, it's bad for business to pay somebody less because of their gender or their age or their race or their ethnicity, religion or disability; and that justice isn't about some abstract legal theory or footnote in a casebook. It's about how our laws affect the daily lives and the daily realities of people; their ability to make a living and care for their families and achieve their goals.

Ultimately, equal pay isn't just an economic issue for millions of Americans and their families; it's a question of who we are and whether we're truly living up to our fundamental ideals; whether we'll do our part, as generations before us, to ensure those words put on paper some 200 years ago really mean something, to breathe new life into them with a more enlightened understanding that is appropriate for our time.

That is what Lilly Ledbetter challenged us to do. And today I sign this bill not just in her honor, but in the honor of those who came before. Women like my grandmother, who worked in a bank all her life, and even after she hit that glass ceiling, kept getting up and giving her best every day, without complaint, because she wanted something better for me and my sister.

And I sign this bill for my daughters and all those who will come after us, because I want them to grow up in a nation that values their contributions, where there are no limits to their dreams, and they have opportunities their mothers and grandmothers never could have imagined.

In the end, that's why Lilly stayed the course. She knew it was too late for her; that this bill wouldn't undo the years of injustice she faced or restore the earnings she was denied. But this grandmother from Alabama kept on fighting, because she was thinking about the next generation. It's what we've always done in America, set our sights high for ourselves, but even higher for our children and our grandchildren.

And now it's up to us to continue this work. This bill is an important step, a simple fix to ensure fundamental fairness for American workers, and I want to thank this remarkable and bipartisan group of legislators who worked so hard to get it passed. And I want to thank all the advocates who are in the audience who worked so hard to get it passed. This is only the beginning. I know that if we stay focused, as Lilly did, and keep standing for what's right, as Lilly did, we will close that pay gap, and we will make sure that our daughters have the same rights, the same chances, and the same freedoms to pursue their dreams as our sons.

So thank you, Lilly Ledbetter.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Lilly Ledbetter, former employee, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. S. 181, approved January 29, was assigned Public Law No. 111–2.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Economic Advisers and an Exchange With Reporters
January 29, 2009

The President. Well, it's good to see you guys. I just had a terrific conversation with my Secretary of the Treasury, the Vice President, as well as the rest of our economic team about the steps that we need to move forward on, not only on the economic recovery and reinvestment package, but also on making sure that we begin the process of regulating Wall Street so that we can improve the flow of credit; banks start lending again, so that businesses can reopen and that we can create more jobs; but also to make sure that we never find ourselves in the kind of crisis that we're in again, that we've seen over the last several months.

And Secretary Geithner is hard at work on this process. We expect that even as the reinvestment and recovery package moves forward—as I said, that's only one leg of the stool, and that these other legs of the stool will be rolled out systematically in the coming weeks so that the American people will have a clear sense of a comprehensive strategy designed to put people back to work, reopen businesses, get credit flowing again.

One point I want to make is that all of us are going to have responsibilities to get this economy moving again. And when I saw an article today indicating that Wall Street bankers had given themselves $20 billion worth of bonuses, the same amount of bonuses as they gave themselves in 2004, at a time when most of these institutions were teetering on collapse, and they are asking for taxpayers to help sustain them, and when taxpayers find themselves in the difficult position that if they don't provide help that the entire system could come down on top of our heads, that is the height of irresponsibility. It is shameful.

And part of what we're going to need is for the folks on Wall Street who are asking for help to show some restraint and show some discipline and show some sense of responsibility. The American people understand that we've got a big hole that we've got to dig ourselves out of, but they don't like the idea that people are digging a bigger hole even as they're being asked to fill it up.

And so we're going to be having conversations as this process moves forward directly with these folks on Wall Street to underscore that they have to start acting in a more responsible fashion if we are to, together, get this economy rolling again. There will be time for them to make profits, and there will be time for them to get bonuses; now is not that time. And that's a message that I intend to send directly to them, I expect Secretary Geithner to send to them—and Secretary Geithner already had to pull back one institution that had gone forward with a multimillion dollar jet plane purchase at the same time as they're receiving TARP money. We shouldn't have to do that because they should know better. And we will continue to send that message loud and clear.

Having said that, I am confident that with the recovery package moving through the

House and through the Senate, with the excellent work that's already been done by Secretary Geithner in consultation with Larry Summers and Paul Volcker and other individuals, that we are going to be able to set up a regulatory framework that rights the ship and that gets us moving again. And I know the American people are eager to get moving again. They want to work. They are serious about their responsibilities. I am too, in this White House, and I hope that the folks on Wall Street are going to be thinking in the same way.

All right. Thank you, guys.

Super Bowl XLIII

Q. The Steelers or Cardinals, sir?

The President. I have to say, you know, I wish the Cardinals the best. Kurt Warner is a great story, and he's closer to my age than anybody else on the field, but I am a long-time Steelers fan. Mr. Rooney, the owner, was just an extraordinary supporter during the course of the campaign. Franco Harris was campaigning for me in Pittsburgh. So——

Vice President Joe Biden. Coach signed up with you too. He's—[*inaudible*].

The President. Right, Coach Tomlin was a supporter. So I—you know, I wish the best to the Cardinals. They've been long suffering; it's a great Cinderella story. But other than the Bears, the Steelers are probably the team that's closest to my heart.

All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:27 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner; Lawrence H. Summers, Director, National Economic Council; Paul A. Volcker, Chairman, President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board; Kurt Warner, quarterback, Arizona Cardinals; Daniel M. Rooney, chairman, Franco Harris, former running back, and Mike Tomlin, head coach, Pittsburgh Steelers.

Statement on Former Governor Rod Blagojevich of Illinois
January 29, 2009

Today ends a painful episode for Illinois. For months, the State had been crippled by a crisis of leadership. Now that cloud has lifted. I wish Governor Quinn the best and pledge my full cooperation as he undertakes his new responsibilities.

NOTE: The statement referred to Gov. Patrick J. Quinn of Illinois, who assumed the office of Governor upon former Governor Rod Blagojevich's conviction on Articles of Impeachment by the Illinois State senate.

Statement on Congressional Passage of Health Care Legislation
January 29, 2009

As the worsening economy causes families to lose their jobs and health insurance, it is vital that we redouble our efforts to ensure that every child in America has access to affordable health care. That is why I am pleased that the Senate has joined the House in passing bipartisan legislation to provide health insurance to children whose families have been hurt most by this downturn. Providing health care to more than 10 million children through the Children's Health Insurance Program will serve as a down payment on my commitment to ensure that every American has access to quality, affordable health care.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 2.

Remarks on Signing Executive Orders Regarding Labor and a Memorandum Creating the Middle Class Working Families Task Force

January 30, 2009

Thank you for joining us today. It is a privilege to be among this diverse group representing labor unions and non-for-profit organizations and advocates for our business community. And I am pleased to be here with our outstanding Vice President, Joe Biden. I see some of my colleagues—got some Senators here; we got a Governor, at least one of them I see over here; Members of Congress; and a lot of good friends and Cabinet members. So this is an outstanding gathering.

Today we learned that our economy shrank in the last 3 months of 2008 by 3.8 percent. That's the worst contraction in close to three decades. This isn't just an economic concept, this is a continuing disaster for America's working families. As worrying as these numbers are, it's what they mean for the American people that really matters and that's so alarming: families making fewer purchases; businesses making fewer investments; employers sustaining fewer jobs.

The recession is deepening and the urgency of our economic crisis is growing. Yesterday, we reached a new threshold: the highest number of Americans receiving unemployment benefits on record. Every day it seems there's another round of layoffs, another round of jobs lost, and families' lives turned upside down. And we lost 2.6 million jobs last year, and another 2.8 million people who need and want full-time work had to settle for part-time employment. So this is a difficult moment.

But I believe if we act boldly and swiftly it can be an American moment, when we work through our differences together and overcome our divisions to face this crisis. While our GDP may have grown smaller, it's undiminished when it comes to our innovative spirit, our work ethic, our values, and our resolve and resilience as Americans.

For 2 years I traveled across this country. I met thousands of people, hard-working, middle-class Americans who shared with me their hopes and their hardships. These are the men and the women who form the backbone of our economy, the most productive workers in the world. They do their jobs. They build the products and provide the services that drive America's prosperity.

And these are the folks who approached me on the campaign trail, in union halls, in church basements, and coffee shops and VFW halls and shop floors, and they told me about jobs lost and homes foreclosed, hours cut and benefits slashed, the costs of life slowly slipping away and chipping away at the hopes of affording college or a new home or retirement. It's like the American Dream in reverse. These are the families who have, by no fault of their own, been hit hardest as the economy has worsened.

They need action now. They need us to pass the American recovery and reinvestment plan, a plan that will save or create more than 3 million jobs over the next few years and make investments that will serve our economy for years to come. We intend to double our capacity to generate renewable energy while redoubling our efforts to use energy more efficiently. We will rebuild crumbling roads and retrofit aging transit systems and renovate 10,000 schools for our children, and we'll bring health care into the 21st century by computerizing medical records, counting—saving countless lives and billions of dollars.

I'm pleased that the House has acted with the urgency necessary in passing this plan. I hope we can strengthen it further in the Senate. What we can't do is drag our feet or delay much longer. The American people expect us to act, and that's exactly what I intend to do as President of the United States.

But passing my plan is not the end, it's just the beginning of what we have to do. We know we need to create jobs, but not just any jobs. We need to create jobs that sustain families and sustain dreams, jobs in new and growing industries, jobs that don't feel like a dead end but a way forward and a way up, jobs that will foster a vibrant and growing middle class, because the strength of our economy can be

measured directly by the strength of our middle class. And that's why I've created the Task Force on Middle Class Working Families, and why I've asked my Vice President, Joe Biden, to lead it.

There's no one who brings to bear the same combination of personal experience and substantive expertise. Joe has come a long way and has achieved a great deal, but he has never forgotten his roots as a working-class kid from Scranton, Pennsylvania. He has lived the American Dream, and lived and worked to make that dream a reality for others.

This task force will bring together my economic advisers and members of my Cabinet to focus on policies that will really benefit the middle class, policies to create jobs that pay well and provide a chance to save, to create jobs in growing fields and train workers to fill them, to ensure that workplaces are safe and fair as well as flexible for employees juggling the demands of work and family.

And I think I should note that when I talk about the middle class, I'm talking about folks who are currently on the middle class, but also people who aspire to be in the middle class. We're not forgetting the poor. They are going to be front and center, because they too share our American Dream. And we're going to make sure that they can get a piece of that American Dream if they're willing to work for it.

I also believe that we have to reverse many of the policies towards organized labor that we've seen these last 8 years, policies with which I've sharply disagreed. I do not view the labor movement as part of the problem, to me it's part of the solution. We need to level the playing field for workers and the unions that represent their interests, because we know that you cannot have a strong middle class without a strong labor movement. We know that strong, vibrant, growing unions can exist side by side with strong, vibrant, and growing businesses. This isn't a either/or proposition between the interests of workers and the interests of shareholders, that's the old argument. The new argument is that the American economy is not and has never been a zero-sum game. When workers are prospering, they buy products that make businesses prosper. We can be competitive and lean and mean and still create a situation where workers are thriving in this country.

So I'm going to be signing three Executive orders designed to ensure that Federal contracts serve taxpayers efficiently and effectively. One of these orders is going to prevent taxpayer dollars from going to reimburse Federal contractors who spend money trying to influence the formation of unions. We will also require that Federal contractors inform their employees of their rights under the National Labor Relations Act. Federal labor laws encourage collective bargaining, and employees should know their rights to avoid disruption of Federal contracts.

And I'm issuing an order so that qualified employees will be able to keep their jobs even when a contract changes hands. We shouldn't deprive the Government of these workers who have so much experience in making government work.

We need to keep our energy focused and our eyes fixed on the real measure of our prosperity, the success of folks that Joe and I have met across this country who are working hard each and every day. I'm eager to see this task force in action. I'm eager to discuss its findings with Joe Biden. And working with the people in this room, I intend to get this economy on track, to create the jobs of the future, and to make sure that the American people can achieve their dreams, not just for themselves, but for their children.

So with that, let me introduce our Chair of our middle class task force, my Vice President and the pride of Delaware—[*laughter*]—Joe Biden.

[*At this point, Vice President Joe Biden made brief remarks, and then the President signed the Executive orders and memorandum.*]

I'm getting good at this. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:58 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Biden. The related Executive orders and memorandum are listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's Weekly Address
January 31, 2009

This morning I'd like to talk about some good news and some bad news as we confront our economic crisis.

The bad news is well known to Americans across our country as we continue to struggle through unprecedented economic turmoil. Yesterday we learned that our economy shrank by nearly 4 percent from October through December. That decline was the largest in over a quarter century, and it underscores the seriousness of the economic crisis that my administration found when we took office.

Already the slowdown has cost us tens of thousands of jobs in January alone. And the picture is likely to get worse before it gets better.

Make no mistake, these are not just numbers. Behind every statistic there's a story. Many Americans have seen their lives turned upside down. Families have been forced to make painful choices. Parents are struggling to pay the bills. Patients can't afford care. Students can't keep pace with tuition. And workers don't know whether their retirement will be dignified and secure.

The good news is that we are moving forward with a sense of urgency equal to the challenge. This week, the House passed the American recovery and reinvestment plan, which will save or create more than 3 million jobs over the next few years. It puts a tax cut into the pockets of working families and places a downpayment on America's future by investing in energy independence and education, affordable health care, and American infrastructure.

Now this recovery plan moves to the Senate. I will continue working with both parties so that the strongest possible bill gets to my desk. With the stakes so high we simply cannot afford the same old gridlock and partisan posturing in Washington. It's time to move in a new direction.

Americans know that our economic recovery will take years, not months. But they will have little patience if we allow politics to get in the way of action, and our economy continues to slide. That's why I am calling on the Senate to pass this plan, so that we can put people back to work and begin the long, hard work of lifting our economy out of this crisis. No one bill, no matter how comprehensive, can cure what ails our economy. So just as we jumpstart job creation, we must also ensure that markets are stable, credit is flowing, and families can stay in their homes.

Last year, Congress passed a plan to rescue the financial system. While the package helped avoid a financial collapse, many are frustrated by the results, and rightfully so. Too often taxpayer dollars have been spent without transparency or accountability. Banks have been extended a hand, but homeowners, students, and small businesses that need loans have been left to fend on their own.

And adding to this outrage, we learned this week that even as they petitioned for taxpayer assistance, Wall Street firms shamefully paid out nearly $20 billion in bonuses for 2008. While I'm committed to doing what it takes to maintain the flow of credit, the American people will not excuse or tolerate such arrogance and greed. The road to recovery demands that we all act responsibly, from Main Street to Washington to Wall Street.

Soon my Treasury Secretary, Tim Geithner, will announce a new strategy for reviving our financial system that gets credit flowing to businesses and families. We'll help lower mortgage costs and extend loans to small businesses so they can create jobs. We'll ensure that CEOs are not draining funds that should be advancing our recovery. And we will insist on unprecedented transparency, rigorous oversight, and clear accountability, so taxpayers know how their money is being spent and whether it is achieving results.

Rarely in history has our country faced economic problems as devastating as this crisis. But the strength of the American people compels us to come together. The road ahead will be long, but I promise you that every day that I go to work in the Oval Office, I carry with me your stories, and my administration is

dedicated to alleviating your struggles and advancing your dreams. You are calling for action. Now is the time for those of us in Washington to live up to our responsibilities.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:15 p.m. on January 30 in the Library at the White House for broadcast on January 31. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 30 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on January 31.

Statement on Provincial Elections in Iraq
January 31, 2009

I congratulate the people of Iraq on holding significant Provincial elections today. Millions of Iraqi citizens from every ethnic and religious group went peacefully to the polls across the country to choose new Provincial councils. It is important that the councils get seated, select new governors, and begin work on behalf of the Iraqi people who elected them.

The elections were managed and organized by the Iraqi Government with vital assistance from the United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq. Iraqi police and military forces helped secure the polling sites and protected voters as they cast their ballots. This important step forward should continue the process of Iraqis taking responsibility for their future.

The United States is proud to have provided technical assistance, along with the United Nations and other international organizations, to Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission, which performed professionally under difficult circumstances.

Interview With Matt Lauer of NBC's "Today"
February 1, 2009

The President's Mother-in-Law

Mr. Lauer. We're here in the Map Room at the White House with the 44th President of the United States. President Obama, it's great to be with you. How you doing?

The President. I'm doing great, Matt, thank you.

Mr. Lauer. So you've been President 12 days. So let me ask the question that's on everyone's mind right now: How's it going living with your mother-in-law? [*Laughter*]

The President. Fortunately, I love my mother-in-law and——

Mr. Lauer. I'm just asking. I'm not trying to start trouble.

The President. She is actually—she defends me whenever I screw up. So, Michelle, you know, she's about to come down hard, my mother-in-law comes in, intercedes so——

Mr. Lauer. Everything's copacetic.

The President. The longer she stays, the better off I'm going to be.

The First Family's Transition to Life in the White House

Mr. Lauer. I was driving over here, Mr. President; I was thinking about this enormous transition that you've been through taking on the reins as Commander in Chief, Mrs. Obama becoming the First Lady. But you've got a daughter, 10, and a daughter, 7, and this is a huge game-changer for them as well. How are they doing?

The President. You know, they—I said this, I think, in an earlier interview—people think I'm cool; nobody is cooler than my two girls. They just seem to take whatever comes with, you know, happiness and steadiness. And they're loving school, they're making friends—in fact, they've got some friends from school over today—and they've already joined some clubs. And Sasha, you know, I think maybe to endear myself to her, she decided she wanted to join a basketball team, so what more could I want?

Mr. Lauer. Are you getting to take part in some of the routines? I was thinking, you've been on the road basically for 2 years, although you got home a lot. Now, you're all under the same room, basically, for 12 days. Are you there for breakfast? Do you get to read them a story at night, tuck them in bed? How's it going?

The President. It's the best deal of this whole thing, is it turns out I've got this nice home office. And at the end of the day, I can come home—even if I've got more work to do—I can have dinner with them; I can help them with their homework; I can tuck them in. If I've got to go back to the office, I can. But I'm seeing them now more than any time in the last 2 years, and that's been great for the whole family.

The President's First Days in Office

Mr. Lauer. President Bush said in his last press conference here at the White House, he said he wasn't sure when it would happen for you, but there would be a moment, perhaps in the Oval Office, when you would stop and realize, I am the President of the United States. I'm curious, have you had that moment?

The President. There have been a couple of times, some wonderful, some sobering. Whenever you take that walk down the Colonnade and you go to the Oval Office, I do think you get this sense of the history that you're now a part of. Some sobering moments: having to sign letters for troops who have died and sending letters to their families, where you realize every decision you make counts, and you don't have time to spend a lot of time on inconsequential stuff. You've got to focus on, at this point, putting people back to work, but also reminding yourselves that you've got hundreds of thousands of people around the world who are putting themselves in harm's way, and you're the Commander in Chief.

Global Terrorism/U.S. Armed Forces

Mr. Lauer. You talk about sobering moments. Even as a Senator and member of the Foreign Relations Committee you were getting intelligence briefings, on the campaign trail also, and during the transition. But now, from what I understand, every day you go down there and there's that intelligence briefing on your desk, and it's got to contain some pretty sobering stuff.

There are millions, tens of millions of people watching this broadcast right now, Mr. President. If they were to have access to the same information you have now on a daily basis, how much less sleep would we all be getting?

The President. Here's what I think is important for everybody to understand: We've got real threats, and we have to remain vigilant, but the quality of our Armed Forces has never been better. When you meet the people who are charged with keeping America safe, it gives you enormous confidence. They are on the case day in, day out, with extraordinary professionalism. But there is no doubt that we have to make sure that we don't let up, because there are people who would be willing to do us harm.

U.S. Troop Withdrawal From Iraq/Afghanistan

Mr. Lauer. Let's talk about some of those men and women who are serving this country overseas in Afghanistan, other locations, in Iraq. And I'm sure they're watching today; it's a big event for the Armed Services. And a lot of those people have a vested interest in one of your campaign promises to end this war and get them home as soon—within 16 months or so—as humanly possible.

So when you look at them, can you say that a substantial number of them will be home in time for next Super Bowl Sunday?

The President. Yes. I mean, we're going to roll out in a very formal fashion what our intentions are in Iraq, as well as Afghanistan. But in conversations that I've had with the Joint Chiefs, with people—the commanders on the ground, I think that we have a sense, now that the Iraqis just had a very significant election, with no significant violence there, that we are in a position to start putting more responsibility on the Iraqis, and that's good news for not only the troops in the field, but their families who are carrying an enormous burden.

National Economy

Mr. Lauer. The economy, I mean, people are going to watch this game today; they're going to blow off some steam; they're going to have a good time. But a lot of them are going to go to bed, they're going to wake up tomorrow morning, and the worry is going to start again. They're going to worry about losing their jobs and their homes and putting their kids through school and making ends meet.

How much worse is the economy going to get, Mr. President, before it gets better?

The President. Well, I think we're going to be in for a tough several months. We've got to get this economic recovery plan passed. We've got to start putting people back to work. We're going to have to straighten out the credit markets and make sure that credit is flowing to businesses and individuals so that they can start investing and hiring people again.

And, you know, as soon as Congress moves forward on the recovery plan, we are going to be also releasing our plan for the financial sector and regulating the financial sector. I have confidence we're going to be able to get the economy back on track, but it's going to take a number of months before we stop falling, and then a little bit longer for us to get back on track.

Economic Stabilization Legislation

Mr. Lauer. And when it comes to the stimulus plan, the House passed its version last week, but without one Republican vote. That disappointed a lot of people. The Senate takes up their version of the measure starting tomorrow. How important is gaining some more Republican support for that? How big a test of your leadership at this early stage of your Presidency?

The President. Well, look, the important thing is getting the thing passed. And I've done extraordinary outreach, I think, to Republicans, because they have some good ideas, and I want to make sure that those ideas are incorporated.

I am confident that by the time we actually have the final package on the floor that we are going to see substantial support. And people are going to say: this is a serious effort; it has no earmarks. We're going to be trimming out things that are not relevant to putting people back to work right now.

Mr. Lauer. Can you predict a number of Republican votes——

The President. No, of course not.

Mr. Lauer. You wouldn't do that?

The President. No, I wouldn't. But I'm confident that—look, I think that the House Democrats actually adopted a number of ideas that the House Republicans had offered. Obviously, the House Republicans wanted to make a statement. Now it moves to the Senate. We've got 535 people who feel it's their responsibility to represent their constituents and make their voices heard.

So this is—democracy is always a somewhat messy process. But the thing I want all of them to remember, and the thing I'm thinking about every single day, is the thousands of people who are being laid off of their jobs right now. They can't afford politics as usual, and old habits are hard to break, but now is the time to break them because we've got an urgent situation.

Bowl Championship Series/2008 BCS National Champion University of Florida Gators

Mr. Lauer. Let's lighten up a little bit. Let's move towards sports, okay? You came out and you said, "Look, in college football I'm not crazy about the current system for determining a national champion."

The President. This is true.

Mr. Lauer. "I'd rather see a playoff system like in professional baseball or professional football."

So will you look into the camera right now and talk to the people of Florida and their 27 electoral votes, and tell them that the Gators are not the national champions of football?

The President. Where's the camera, right here?

Mr. Lauer. There you go.

The President. Congratulations, Gators, on an outstanding season. Tebow is great. Wouldn't you feel better if you had beat every team that was out there through a playoff system?

Mr. Lauer. Twenty-seven electoral votes. [*Laughter*]

The President. I love you. I think they could have taken on anybody through the playoff system. By the way, one of our Secret Service guys, his son is a tackle on the Florida Gators, so, you know, I've got soft spot for the Gators.

Mr. Lauer. You've got a connection.

The President. Absolutely.

Super Bowl XLIII

Mr. Lauer. Let's talk about this game today. You came out—and most Presidents don't pick a team—you came right out and you said, "Look, I know the Rooneys. They've been good friends of mine; they endorsed me." I think you got the AFC championship ball——

The President. I did.

Mr. Lauer. So you said, "Other than my dear Bears, they're closest to my heart." But I'm having a hard time understanding how you, of all people, wouldn't associate with the Cardinals.

The President. Underdog——

Mr. Lauer. I mean, it is a Cinderella story. The team that came from nowhere to the big game, the audacity of hope.

The President. Not to mention the fact that Kurt Warner is close to my age. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Lauer. Right, exactly. How can you turn your back on the Cardinals?

The President. I love Kurt Warner's story. I love—Larry Fitzgerald seems like just a wonderful young man. It's a great story. But Rooney didn't just endorse me; that guy was out going to steel plants campaigning for me. Franco Harris was out waving towels at my rallies.

Mr. Lauer. Do you have a Terrible Towel in the other room?

The President. I do, actually, so——

Mr. Lauer. Are you going to be waving them at the party?

The President. I'm not going to be rubbing it in. We've got some Arizona Congressmen here, and I may need their vote on the recovery package. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Lauer. Give me a score. What's the score going to be in this game?

The President. You know, it's tough to predict, but I think the Steelers are going to eke it out in a close one.

Super Bowl XLII

Mr. Lauer. All right. Well, last year, you predicted the Patriots over my Giants. I don't have a question here; I just wanted to rub that in a little bit. [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, I'm still wondering how the guy made that catch.

Mr. Lauer. The Hail Mary?

The President. He has some Stickum on his helmet.

Mr. Lauer. David Tyree.

The President. He had Stickum on his helmet.

Mr. Lauer. They just dissected that play in about a 5-minute segment on the show.

The President. It was one of the greatest plays in pro football history.

The President's BlackBerry

Mr. Lauer. Let's talk about the BlackBerry, all right? You got to keep it.

The President. I did.

Mr. Lauer. Can I see it? Do you have it?

The President. You know, I didn't bring it down here.

Mr. Lauer. No?

The President. No, it's like Inspector Gadget; you know, the—if you touched it, it might blow up.

Mr. Lauer. I kind of envision that it's like Q in the James Bond. Did they give you, like, fingerprint recognition technology or something?

The President. The works. The works. It turns into a car if I have to make a quick getaway. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Lauer. How many people have that e-mail address?

The President. A handful. Look, there are security issues involved, and so we've got to make sure that I'm not creating a situation where, you know, potentially people can comprise our system somehow.

Mr. Lauer. But, like, world leaders, can they contact you on that BlackBerry?

The President. Typically, world leaders are going to be contacting me through the Oval Office. They know how to reach me there.

Mr. Lauer. Sasha and Malia?

The President. Sasha and Malia can always contact me.

Mr. Lauer. Oprah?

The President. Well——

Mr. Lauer. Maybe. You're not going to hook me up, are you?

The President. Matt, do you want one?

Mr. Lauer. No, I want your e-mail address. [*Laughter*] I want to communicate with you during the game.

The President. I like your son; I might give it to him. I'm not going to give it to you. Jack, he might get one.

Mr. Lauer. Jack, give it to your papa, okay? [*Laughter*]

The President's Public Image

Mr. Lauer. Let me end on some—not only did you just become President, obviously, that carries a certain amount of fame with it. But you have achieved a certain rock star status outside of that.

The President. Outside of my house. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Lauer. Well, let me show you. This is the current issue of US Weekly, and here's a great picture of——

The President. Oh, it's a beautiful——

Mr. Lauer. ——you and Michelle and your daughters. The reason I bring this up—I think it's funny—it's a great picture. But I want to show you the cover. Look what they did: they took you off the cover; they cut you out of it.

The President. Yes, it's a little hurtful.

Mr. Lauer. You got replaced by Jessica Simpson.

The President. Yes, who is in a weight battle, apparently. [*Laughter*] Yes, oh, well.

The President's Message to the American People

Mr. Lauer. What would you like to say to the tens of millions of people who are watching this game today?

The President. Well, listen, have a wonderful time. The Super Bowl is one of the finest American traditions. I want to give a special shoutout to our troops overseas who are going to be watching this, because you allow not just this game to take place, but our liberties to be preserved, and we're very grateful to you.

Mr. Lauer. President Obama, it's a pleasure. Thanks for welcoming us to the White House. Enjoy the game.

The President. Have a great time.

Mr. Lauer. Thank you. We certainly will.

The President. I'll see if I have to eat my words again next year.

Mr. Lauer. We'll see; we'll call you tomorrow, okay? I'll e-mail you. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, there was a break in the interview, and then it resumed as follows.*]

Bipartisanship in Government

Mr. Lauer. You talked a lot during the campaign and in your Inaugural Address about bipartisanship, getting people to work together, about unity. And then people watched this vote on the stimulus package in the House, and they saw that not one Republican voted for it. What would you say to the people who were watching that speech of yours at home and maybe the 2 million people who were freezing out there on the Mall, who were saying, "You know what, we thought we could change, and maybe we were naive"?

The President. Oh, listen, it's only been 10 days. People have to recognize that it's going to take some time for trust to be built not only between Democrats and Republicans, but between Congress and the White House, between the House and the Senate. You know, we've had a dysfunctional political system for a while now. And the fact that we have been able to move what is by all accounts a historic piece of legislation through this quickly, and that the Senate is having a serious debate about it, and we still expect it to be on my desk for signature before President's Day, is quite an achievement. But it's going to take time for people to start getting used to the fact that we don't have to score political points on every issue. Once in a while, we can take the politics out of it and just focus on getting the job done for the American people.

National Economy/Economic Stabilization Legislation

Mr. Lauer. You were pretty agitated this past week when the news broke of these Wall Street bonuses paid out in 2008, even as some of the firms that paid them out had their hands out looking for Federal assistance. And is there some—is there an audit underway right now, or can there be an audit that takes place to make sure that none of the taxpayers' monies goes to anything but stabilizing these firms?

The President. That's what I've asked my Treasury Secretary to do: to put together a clear set of guidelines. If a bank or a financial institution is getting relief, then they've got to abide by certain conditions. Now, as I said when I blew off a little steam in the Oval Office, the American people don't resent folks for getting rich. That's part of the American way. But they do expect that you share in the pain, and they do expect that if taxpayers are having to pony up the bill, then these folks are going to show some restraint. Obviously, they're not doing it on their own. We're going to have to make sure that it's part of the package that we put forward in terms of how we spend money in the future.

Mr. Lauer. Well, we've seen some crazy examples; I mean, when the auto executives arrived in Washington for those hearings in Congress in those private jets, these bonuses. The American people might worry that the bailout, you know, could be off course, because if the money is going to people who simply are out of touch, it's not a confidence builder.

The President. Right. Well, and that's why it's my job as President and Congress's job to make sure that there are some rules of the road that people are going to abide by, and that we've got transparency and accountability, that this stuff is being posted. And one of the things that we're going to do is put together an independent board on the recovery package——

Mr. Lauer. Right.

The President. ——that actually looks at these programs and the money before it goes out the door. Nothing is worse than finding out after the fact——

Mr. Lauer. When it's too late——

The President. ——when it's too late that money has been wasted. We're going to make sure that on the front end, this stuff has been evaluated.

Mr. Lauer. It's hard to estimate because there are so many different numbers going around there, Mr. President, but it seems like somewhere in the neighborhood of $300 to $350 billion in TARP money has already gone out and been spent. And you're hearing more and more people saying, it's going to take much, much more. I'm curious, though, have you heard anyone credible be able to put a real figure on how much it's going to take to fix this, and, B, who can say, "And this money will work; it will fix the economy"?

The President. Here's what I've heard from a range of economists across the political spectrum. The banks, because of mismanagement, because of huge risk-taking, are now in very vulnerable positions. We can expect that we're going to have to do more to shore up the financial system. We also are going to have to make sure that we set up financial regulations so that not only does this never happen again, but you start having some sort of trust in how the credit markets work again.

Mr. Lauer. Right.

The President. So all that's going to have to happen on parallel tracks. How much it's going to end up costing taxpayers is going to depend in part on how well we manage the process, how well we are overseeing the spending. And that's why I've said before we put out more money, what we want to do is set up very clear guidelines. That's the charge of my Treasury Secretary, Tim Geithner; that's the charge that Larry Summers, my national economic adviser, has. And I do have confidence that we're going to be able to get it right, but it's not going to be overnight, and there's no silver bullets to this. The fact of the matter is, is that we are suffering from a massive hangover from a binge of risk-taking.

Mr. Lauer. And it's still getting worse.

The President. And that's still getting worse. And it's going to take some time for us to be able to dig ourselves out of this hole.

Mr. Lauer. One of those parallel tracks you talked about—are you planning in the near future to announce an idea that will buy up the toxic debt from the balance sheets of these banks with perhaps a so-called bad bank, similar to what happened with the savings and loan crisis? And if so, what do you think that could cost? Because Chuck Schumer came out and said, since we don't really know what those debts are worth, this could cost $4 trillion.

The President. No, it's a—we're not going to be spending $4 trillion worth of taxpayer money. It's conceivable that we have more—not only is it conceivable, it is likely that the banks have not fully acknowledged all the losses that they're going to experience. They're going to have to write down those losses, and some banks won't make it. Other banks are going to make sure that we strengthen. All deposits are going to be safe for ordinary people, but we're going to have to wring out some of these bad assets and——

Mr. Lauer. Are you going to set up a "bad bank" or whatever it would be called?

The President. Well, look, I don't want to preempt an announcement next week. And there's a lot of technical aspects to it, and if I say that we're doing one thing, then the markets might interpret it differently from what it ends up being. But the basic principle: that we're going to have to see some of this debt written down; that the Government is going to have to support some banks; that others that are not viable—essentially, that we're going to have to do something with those assets.

You know, that's all going to be part of a overall plan that not only strengthens the credit markets, but more importantly, puts people back to work, because that's what people are experiencing right now. They're seeing their jobs lost every single day. Their neighbors, friends, or, you know, coworkers are losing their jobs. And what they want to know is, is that Congress and the White House has a single-minded focus on making sure that people can be put back to work.

Mr. Lauer. Let me ask you about a exit strategy, and I'm not talking about in Iraq here, although there's been a lot of talk about that. But do you have an exit strategy for this bailout? In other words, at some point will you say, "Wait a minute, we've spent this amount of money; we're not seeing the results; we've got to change course dramatically." Is there that kind of strategy in place?

The President. Well, if we are doing things properly then what you'll start seeing is slowly trust get rebuilt, banks' balance sheets will start to strengthen; they'll start lending to each other; they'll start lending to companies; they'll start lending to small businesses. There will be some institutions that continue to be weak, and we're going to have to do something with them. Over time, as the market confidence is restored, then what we can do is start getting rid of some of these assets, some of the stock the taxpayers now have in some of these companies start being worth more. We sell them off to private parties, and taxpayers can recoup that money.

So you know, it's going to have to happen in stages. The key thing, I think, for the public right now is they have to know that I'm going to be spending all my time making sure that their money is not wasted, because I'm going to be, ultimately, accountable. Look, I'm at the start of my administration. One nice thing about the situation I find myself in is that I will be held accountable. You know, I've got 4 years and——

Mr. Lauer. You're going to know quickly how people feel about what's happened.

The President. That's exactly right. And, you know, a year from now, I think people are going to see that we're starting to make some progress, but there's still going to be some pain out there. If I don't have this done in 3 years, then there's going to be a one-term proposition. And I welcome that responsibility, because I think now's the time for us to start shifting and thinking about long-term economic growth.

Guantanamo Bay Detention Facility Closure

Mr. Lauer. Let me go on quickly if I can to some other subjects. You signed an Executive order in your first week that says you'll close the military detention center at Guantanamo within

a year. So the clock is ticking. And already you've heard the criticism that you don't know what you're going to do with the 245 prisoners being held there. Peter Hoekstra, the top Republican on the House Intelligence Committee, said the decision to close Guantanamo by a year from now "places hope ahead of reality. It sets an objective without a plan to get there."

The President. Let me say this. We had a long campaign between myself and John McCain. One thing we did not disagree on—in fact, something that John McCain was as adamant as I was, was that we needed to close Guantanamo. It's the right thing to do. Ultimately, it will make us safer. You've already seen in the reaction around the world a different sense of America by us taking this action.

Now, is it going to be easy? No, because we've got a couple of hundred of hardcore militants that, unfortunately, because of some problems that we had previously in gathering evidence, we may not be able to try in ordinary courts, but we don't want to release. How we structure that is something that I'm going to do carefully. Our lawyers are reviewing it. I have absolute confidence that, ultimately, we're going to be able to find a mechanism, with the cooperation of the international community, with the cooperation of some very smart Republicans, like Lindsey Graham, a former JAG who knows this stuff well. I have confidence that we're going to be able to find a solution to this problem.

Guantanamo Bay Detainees

Mr. Lauer. Are you at all worried—and some of these people may be released, the ones that seem to be less of a threat. But if one of those people that's released goes back and takes part in the planning of or carrying out of an attack against U.S. interests, you're going to have a Willie Horton times 100 situation on your hands. How are you going to deal with that?

The President. Of course I'm worried about it. Look, the—I have to make the very best judgments I can make in terms of what's going to keep the American people safe, and is what—what's going to uphold our Constitution and our traditions of due process. And what I'm convinced of is that we can balance those interests in a way that makes all of us proud, but also assures that we're not attacked.

Now, can I guarantee—or can anybody guarantee, for that matter—that some of the people who have already been released—keep in mind, I mean, the Bush administration released a whole bunch of folks out of Guantanamo, some of them have rejoined some of these militant organizations—can we guarantee that they're not going to try to participate in another attack? No.

But what I can guarantee is that if we don't uphold our Constitution and our values, that over time that will make us less safe and that will be a recruitment tool for organizations like Al Qaida. That's what I've got to keep my eye on.

Military Operations and Troop Levels in Afghanistan

Mr. Lauer. Let me ask you about Afghanistan. Defense Secretary Robert Gates said this is going to be a long slog, and that it's our greatest military challenge. You're going to send 30,000 additional U.S. troops in there. Can that make a difference in a country that's had 2,000 years of trouble and that's been called the "graveyard of empires"?

The President. Well, first of all, I haven't definitively authorized the 30,000 troops, although planning has been done. And I think that it is very important that we have enough troops on the ground that we're not putting those who are already there at risk, and that we can accomplish some core missions.

We are not going to be able to rebuild Afghanistan into a Jeffersonian democracy.

Mr. Lauer. So what's the mission there now?

The President. What we can do is make sure that Afghanistan is not a safe haven for Al Qaida. What we can do is make sure that it is not destabilizing neighboring Pakistan, which has nuclear weapons. And that's going to require not only military efforts, but also diplomatic efforts. It's also going to require development efforts in a coordinated fashion. And that's why I've asked the Joint Chiefs that

have produced a review. David Petraeus is reviewing the situation there. We assigned Richard Holbrooke as a special envoy to the region. They are all working together. They will be presenting to me a plan.

But the key is the point you made. We've got to have a clear objective. And there's been drift in Afghanistan over the last couple of years. That's something that we intend to fix this year.

The President's Security Detail

Mr. Lauer. Two last questions. One is about security, not national security, but your own. There was an article in the Washington Post that some of the big donors who were invited to some of your Inaugural functions were—I think the word they used was "shocked" by how easy it was to get access to you. And they expressed concerns that not enough was being done to secure you. First of all, just your opinion on that.

The President. I have complete confidence in Secret Service. These guys and gals are unbelievably professional, they know what they're doing, and I basically do what they tell me to do. Now, sometimes I'm the first one to admit that it chafes a little bit being inside this bubble. It's the hardest adjustment of being President, not being able to just take a walk or——

Mr. Lauer. I watched you walk down the halls a couple of times, and there's someone in front of you and someone behind you.

The President. That's exactly right. So it's tough. But I have complete confidence in their ability to keep me safe.

Peanut Butter Products Recall/Food and Drug Administration

Mr. Lauer. Last question. There's been a massive peanut butter products recall in this country over the last several weeks. Most of the products track—trace to one plant down in Georgia that has a bit of a history of sending out products even though there have been traces of Salmonella found.

The question—the obvious question people want to know, is the FDA doing its job?

The President. Well, I think that the FDA has not been able to catch some of these things as quickly as I expect them to catch. And so we're going to be doing a complete review of FDA operations. I don't want to prejudge this particular case, but there have been enough instances over the last several years, and at bare minimum we should be able to count on our Government keeping our kids safe when they eat peanut butter. That's what Sasha——

Mr. Lauer. It seems a simple thing.

The President. That's what Sasha eats for lunch, probably three times a week. And I don't want to have to worry about whether she's going to get sick as a consequence of having her lunch.

So we are going to make sure that we retool the FDA, that it is operating in a highly professional fashion, and most importantly, that we prevent these things, as opposed to trying to catch them after they've already occurred.

Mr. Lauer. I really appreciate your time.

The President. Thank you so much.

Mr. Lauer. Thank you.

[*There was a break in the interview, and then it resumed as follows.*]

The First Family's Transition to Life in the White House

Mr. Lauer. Has there been any surprise in terms of life in the White House? Is there something that the White House has you didn't think they had or doesn't have you thought they did have?

The President. You know, the bowling alley doesn't seem to be improving my game. [*Laughter*] That's the one thing I've noticed.

Mr. Lauer. Have you used it?

The President. We did. We took the kids down, and I wanted to use the bumpers, but Michelle said that's only——

Mr. Lauer. If it doesn't work, you had the gutters at least? That's good. It's good to know you're not cheating in bowling, good. [*Laughter*] You're playing horse on the basketball court.

The President. That's right, playing horse on the basketball court. There is a horseshoe pitch out there, so I'm going to have to practice that a little bit.

Mr. Lauer. After 12 days—it's a minuscule amount of time—are you and Mrs. Obama

more or less confident that you can keep a real sense of normalcy in the girls' lives?

The President. You know, I think that we're going to be okay. Look, Malia is 10, so 3 years from now, she's 13. Who knows what happens to teenagers.

Mr. Lauer. Right.

The President. But if there are a pair of kids who can handle this weird fishbowl, it's those two. They're just even keeled; they're happy, cheerful—the prettiest, respectful kids.

Mr. Lauer. You're starting off from the right place.

The President. That's exactly right. And having—this is where having the mother-in-law, you know, who won't take any guff from them, really helps. So we feel pretty good about it.

Mr. Lauer. Well, we all wish you luck.

The President. Thank you so much.

Mr. Lauer. Go enjoy the game.

The President. Good.

Mr. Lauer. Thanks for your time. I really appreciate it.

NOTE: The interview began taping at 5:07 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson; Tim Tebow, quarterback, University of Florida Gators; Daniel M. Rooney, chairman, Arthur J. Rooney II, president, and Franco Harris, former running back, Pittsburgh Steelers; Kurt Warner, quarterback, and Larry Fitzgerald, Jr., wide receiver, Arizona Cardinals; David Tyree, wide receiver, New York Giants; Jack Lauer, son of Matt Lauer, host of NBC's "Today"; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commander, U.S. Central Command; and Ambassador Richard C. Holbrooke, Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. Mr. Lauer referred to entertainer Jessica Simpson; Willie Horton, convicted felon and subject of a 1988 political campaign advertisement; and television personality and entrepreneur Oprah Winfrey. Portions of this interview could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Remarks Following a Meeting on Economic Stabilization Legislation and an Exchange With Reporters
February 2, 2009

The President. Well, I want to thank Governor Douglas for being here. We met early on during the transition period with all of the Governors from across the country, and with very few exceptions, I heard from Republicans and Democrats the need for action—and swift action—and that's what we've been trying to do in moving this package forward.

And nobody understands this better than Governors and mayors and county officials who are seeing the devastating effects on the ground of this contraction in the economy. People are being laid off, and that means that Governors like Jim are having to not only deal with declining revenue, but increased social services to provide support for people who are unemployed as they're seeking work.

And the recovery package that we are moving forward is designed to provide States relief, to make sure that people who are laid off from their jobs are still able to get unemployment insurance, are still able to get health care, and that we are putting in place the infrastructure of rebuilding roads, bridges, waterways, other projects at the State levels that allow us to put people back to work. And we want to create or save 3 million jobs, and we want to put the investments in place that are going to ensure long-term economic growth.

So as Jim indicated, there are still some differences between Democrats and Republicans on the Hill, between the White House and some of the products that's been discussed on the Hill. But what we can't do is let very modest differences get in the way of the overall package moving forward swiftly.

And so I'm very gratified that Governor Douglas, along with many Governors from

across the country, are going to be weighing in, in these critical next few days. And we hope to be able to get a bill to you in the next couple of weeks so we can put America back to work and start digging ourselves out of this deep hole that we're in.

So thank you so much for taking the time to be here.

Governor James H. Douglas of Vermont. Well, thank you, Mr. President.

The President. All right. Good. Thank you, guys.

Health and Human Services Secretary-Designate Thomas A. Daschle

Q. Mr. President, do you stand behind Tom Daschle? Do you still stand behind Tom Daschle?

The President. Thank you. Absolutely. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:05 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Gov. Douglas.

Remarks on the Nomination of Senator Judd A. Gregg To Be Secretary of Commerce

February 3, 2009

Good morning, everybody. By now, our economic crisis is well-known. Our economy is shrinking. Unemployment rolls are growing. Businesses and families can't get credit, and small businesses can't secure the loans they need to create jobs and get their products to market.

Now is the time for Washington to act with the same sense of urgency that Americans all across the country feel every single day. With the stakes this high, we cannot afford to get trapped in the same old partisan gridlock. That's why I've worked closely with leaders of both parties on a recovery and reinvestment plan that saves or creates more than 3 million jobs over the next 2 years, cuts taxes for 95 percent of American workers, and makes critical investments in our future—in energy and education, health care, and a 21st century infrastructure.

We will act swiftly, and we will act wisely. The vast majority of the investments in the plan will be made within the next 18 months, immediately creating jobs and helping States avoid painful tax hikes and cuts to essential services. And every dime of the spending will be made available to the public on recovery.gov, so every American can see where their tax dollars are going.

But as we act boldly and swiftly to shore up our financial system and revitalize our economy, we must also make sure that the underpinnings of that economy are sound; that our economic infrastructure is rebuilt to handle the traffic of the global economy; that our cutting-edge science and technology remain the envy of the world; that our policies promote the innovative and competitive nature of this economy and facilitate the incubation and commercialization of our startups and small businesses, the very engine of our job creation.

These are the tasks of the Commerce Department. And I believe that Judd Gregg is the right person to help guide the Department towards these goals.

Judd discovered the family business at an early age. His father, Hugh Gregg, was elected the youngest Governor of New Hampshire when judge—Judd was a boy. At a time when the mills in Nashua closed down and folks were laid off, he watched his dad work tirelessly to attract new industry, the kind that created jobs that carried with them a sense of dignity and self-worth. Judd's father even found the time to publish a book titled "All I Learned About Politics," and in keeping with his legendary sense of humor, all of its pages were blank.

When the book is written about Judd Gregg, it will tell the story of a man with his own proud record of service on behalf of the American people. As a businessman, attorney, State executive councilor, Congressman, Governor in his own right, and now as a Senator, he's seen from all angles what makes our economy work for

communities, businesses, and families, and what keeps it from working better. As former chairman of the Senate Budget Committee and Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, Judd has been involved in nearly every facet of public policy. And as Commerce Subcommittee chair on the Senate Appropriations Committee, he's already quite familiar with the Department I've chosen him to lead.

Judd is famous—or infamous, depending on your perspective—on Capitol Hill for his strict fiscal discipline. It's not that he enjoys saying "no," although if it's directed at your bill, you might feel that way. It's that he shares my deep-seated commitment to guaranteeing that our children inherit a future they can afford.

Now, clearly, Judd and I don't agree on every issue; most notably who should have won the election. [*Laughter*] But we agree on the urgent need to get American businesses and families back on their feet. We see eye to eye on conducting the Nation's business in a responsible, transparent, and accountable manner. And we know the only way to solve the great challenges of our time is to put aside stale ideology and petty partisanship and embrace what works.

As one of the Republican Party's most respected voices and skillful negotiators, Judd is a master of reaching across the aisle to get things done. He'll be an outstanding addition to the depth and experience of my economic team, a trusted voice in my Cabinet, and an able and persuasive ambassador for industry who makes it known to the world that America is open for business.

"Commerce defies every wind, overrides every tempest, and invades every zone." These are the words carved into the walls of the Department that I'm so pleased Judd Gregg has agreed to lead. And as we act boldly to defy the winds of this crisis and outride the tempest of this painful moment, I can think of no finer steward for our Nation's commerce. I expect the Senate's quick confirmation of their esteemed colleague, and I look forward to working with Judd in the years ahead.

And I'd like Judd to say just a few words.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:59 a.m. in the Grand Foyer at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary-designate Gregg.

Remarks Following a Visit to Capital City Public Charter School
February 3, 2009

The President. Well, listen, you guys, you've been terrific. Thank you so much for your hospitality——

The First Lady. ——your good questions.

The President. ——your excellent questions.

The First Lady. ——your outstanding listening skills.

The President. You're excellent listeners. And the reason we came to visit: A, we wanted to get out of the White House; B, we wanted to see you guys; but C, the other thing we wanted to tell everybody is that this kind of innovative school, the outstanding work that's being done here by the entire staff and the parents who are so active and involved, is an example of how all our schools should be.

And what I've asked Arne Duncan to do is to make sure that he works as hard as he can over the next several years to make sure that we're reforming our schools; that we're rewarding innovation the way that it's taking place here; that we're encouraging parents to be involved; that we're raising standards for all children so that everybody can learn, especially things like math and science that are going to be so important for the jobs of the future.

And so we're very proud of what's been accomplished at this school, and we want to make sure that we're duplicating that success all across the country. So nothing is going to be more important than this. And the recovery and reinvestment act that we've put forward will provide billions of dollars to build schools and help with school construction. It will provide money to train teachers, especially in subjects like math and science that are so critical. And it will also give Secretary Duncan

the resources he needs to reward excellent, innovative schools. And so we think it's really important for the country that we get that bill passed.

But thank you so much, everybody. Appreciate you.

The First Lady. Thank you, guys. This was fun.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:33 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on Thomas A. Daschle's Decision To Withdraw His Name From Consideration To Be Secretary of Health and Human Services
February 3, 2009

This morning Tom Daschle asked me to withdraw his nomination for Secretary of Health and Human Services. I accept his decision with sadness and regret.

Tom Daschle has devoted his life to public service and health care reform, so that every American has access to health care they can afford. I had hoped that he could bring this passion and expertise to bear to finally achieve that goal, which is so essential to the progress of our economy and the well-being of businesses and families across our Nation.

Tom made a mistake, which he has openly acknowledged. He has not excused it, nor do I.

But that mistake, and this decision, cannot diminish the many contributions Tom has made to this country, from his years in the military to his decades of public service.

Now we must move forward with our plan to life this economy and put people back to work.

Remarks on the National Economy
February 4, 2009

Thank you, Tim, for your hard work on this issue and on the economic recovery.

The economic crisis we face is unlike any we've seen in our lifetime. It's a crisis of falling confidence and rising debt, of widely distributed risk and narrowly concentrated reward, a crisis written in the fine print of subprime mortgages, on the ledger lines of once mighty financial institutions, and on the pink slips that have upended the lives of so many people across this country and cost the economy 2.6 million jobs last year alone.

We know that even if we do everything that we should, this crisis was years in the making, and it will take more than weeks or months to turn things around.

But make no mistake: A failure to act, and act now, will turn crisis into a catastrophe and guarantee a longer recession, a less robust recovery, and a more uncertain future. Millions more jobs will be lost. More businesses will be shuttered. More dreams will be deferred.

And that's why I feel such a sense of urgency about the economic recovery and reinvestment plan that is before Congress today. With it, we can save or create more than 3 million jobs, doing things that will strengthen our country for years to come. It's not merely a prescription for short-term spending, it's a strategy for long-term economic growth in areas like renewable energy and health care and education.

Now, in the past few days, I've heard criticisms that this plan is somehow wanting, and these criticisms echo the very same failed economic theories that led us into this crisis in the first place: the notion that tax cuts alone will solve all our problems; that we can ignore fundamental challenges like energy independence and the high cost of health care; that we can somehow deal with this in a piecemeal fashion and still expect our economy and our country to thrive.

I reject those theories, and so did the American people when they went to the polls in November and voted resoundingly for change. So I

urge Members of Congress to act without delay. No plan is perfect, and we should work to make it stronger. No one is more committed to making it stronger than me. But let's not make the perfect the enemy of the essential. Let's show people all over the country who are looking for leadership in this difficult time that we are equal to the task.

At the same time, we know that this recovery and reinvestment plan is only the first part of what we need to do to restore prosperity and secure our future. We also need a strong and viable financial system to keep credit flowing to businesses and families alike. And my administration will do whatever it takes to restore our financial system. Our recovery depends on it. And so in the next week, Secretary Geithner will release a new strategy to get credit moving again, a strategy that will reflect some of the lessons of past mistakes while laying the foundation of the future.

But in order to restore trust in our financial system, we're going to have to do more than just put forward our plans. In order to restore trust, we've got to make certain that taxpayer funds are not subsidizing excessive compensation packages on Wall Street.

We all need to take responsibility. And this includes executives at major financial firms who turned to the American people, hat in hand, when they were in trouble, even as they paid themselves customary, lavish bonuses. As I said last week, this is the height of irresponsibility; it's shameful. And that's exactly the kind of disregard of the costs and consequences of their actions that brought about this crisis: a culture of narrow self-interest and short-term gain at the expense of everything else.

This is America. We don't disparage wealth. We don't begrudge anybody for achieving success. And we certainly believe that success should be rewarded. But what gets people upset, and rightfully so, are executives being rewarded for failure, especially when those rewards are subsidized by U.S. taxpayers, many of whom are having a tough time themselves.

For top executives to award themselves these kinds of compensation packages in the midst of this economic crisis isn't just bad taste, it's bad strategy, and I will not tolerate it as President. We're going to be demanding some restraint in exchange for Federal aid, so that when firms seek new Federal dollars, we won't find them up to the same old tricks.

As part of the reforms we're announcing today, top executives at firms receiving extraordinary help from U.S. taxpayers will have their compensation capped at $500,000, a fraction of the salaries that have been reported recently. And if these executives receive any additional compensation, it will come in the form of stock that can't be paid up until taxpayers are paid back for their assistance.

Companies receiving Federal aid are going to have to disclose publicly all the perks and luxuries bestowed upon senior executives and provide an explanation to the taxpayers and to shareholders as to why these expenses are justified. And we're putting a stop to these kinds of massive severance packages we've all read about with disgust; we're taking the air out of golden parachutes.

We're asking these firms to take responsibility, to recognize the nature of this crisis and their role in it. We believe that what we've laid out should be viewed as fair and embraced as basic common sense.

And finally, these guidelines we're putting in place are only the beginning of a long-term effort. We're going to examine the ways in which the means and manner of executive compensation have contributed to a reckless culture and a quarter-by-quarter mentality that in turn helped to wreak havoc in our financial system. We're going to be taking a look at broader reforms so that executives are compensated for sound risk management and rewarded for growth measured over years, not just days or weeks.

We all have to pull together and take our share of responsibility. That's true here in Washington; that's true on Wall Street. The American people are carrying a huge burden as a result of this economic crisis, bearing the brunt of its effects as well as the cost of extraordinary measures we're taking to address them. The American people expect and demand that we pursue policies that reflect the reality of this crisis and that will prevent these

kinds of crises from occurring again in the future.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:15 a.m. in the Grand Foyer at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner.

Remarks on Signing the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009
February 4, 2009

All right. Please, everybody have a seat. This is good; this is good. Today, with one of the first bills that I sign, reauthorizing the Children's Health Insurance Program, we fulfill one of the highest responsibilities that we have: to ensure the health and well-being of our Nation's children.

It's a responsibility that's only grown more urgent as our economic crisis deepens, as health care costs have exploded and millions of working families are unable to afford health insurance. Today in America, 8 million children are still uninsured, more than 45 million Americans altogether.

And it's hard to overstate the toll this takes on families: the sleepless nights worrying about somebody getting hurt, or praying that a sick child gets better on her own; the decisions that no parent should ever have to make: how long to put off that doctor's appointment, whether to fill that prescription, whether to let a child play outside, knowing that all it takes is one accident, one injury, to send your family into financial ruin.

The families joining us today know these realities firsthand. When Gregory Secrest from Martinsville, Virginia, lost his job back in August, his kids lost their health care. When he broke the news to his family, his 9-year-old son—where are you?—that's you? I thought so—[*laughter*]—handed over his piggy bank with $4 in it and told his father, "Daddy, if you need it, you take it."

Now, this is not who we are. We're not a nation that leaves struggling families to fend for themselves, especially when they've done everything right. No child in America should be receiving his or her primary care in the emergency room in the middle of the night. No child should be falling behind at school because he can't hear the teacher or see the blackboard. I refuse to accept that millions of our children fail to reach their full potential because we fail to meet their basic needs. In a decent society, there are certain obligations that are not subject to tradeoffs or negotiations, and health care for our children is one of those obligations.

That is why we have passed this legislation. These legislators have passed this legislation on a bipartisan basis to continue coverage for 7 million children, cover an additional 4 million children in need, and finally lift the ban on States providing insurance to legal immigrant children if they choose to do so.

Since it was created more than 10 years ago, the Children's Health Insurance Program has been a lifeline for millions of children whose parents work full time and don't qualify for Medicaid, but through no fault of their own, don't have and can't afford private insurance. For millions of children who fall into that gap, CHIP has provided care when they're sick and preventive services to help them stay well. This legislation will allow us to continue and build on these successes.

But, as I think everybody here will agree, this is only the first step. The way I see it, providing coverage to 11 million children through CHIP is a downpayment on my commitment to cover every single American. And it is just one component of a much broader effort to finally bring our health care system into the 21st century. And that's why the economic recovery and reinvestment plan that's now before Congress is so important.

Now, think about this, if Congress passes this recovery plan, in just 1 month, we will have done more to modernize our health care system than we've done in the past decade.

We'll be on our way to computerizing all of America's medical records, which won't just—[*applause*]—it won't just eliminate inefficiencies, won't just save billions of dollars and create tens of thousands of jobs, but it will save lives by reducing deadly medical errors. We'll have made the single largest investment in prevention and wellness in history, tacking problems like smoking and obesity and helping people live longer, healthier lives. And we'll have extended health insurance for the unemployed, so that workers who lose their jobs don't lose their health care too.

Now let me say this. In the past few days, I've heard criticisms of this plan that, frankly, echo the very same failed theories that helped lead us into this crisis in the first place: The notion that tax cuts alone will solve all our problems; that we can address this enormous crisis with half-steps and piecemeal measures and tinkering around the edges; that we can ignore fundamental challenges like the high cost of health care and still expect our economy and our country to thrive.

I reject these theories, and by the way, so did the American people when they went to the polls in November and voted resoundingly for change. So I urge Members of Congress to act without delay. No plan is perfect, and all of us together, Democrats and Republicans, should work to make it stronger. But let's not make the perfect the enemy of the essential. Let's show people all over our country who are looking for leadership, who are desperate for leadership right now, that in difficult times we're equal to the task. Let's give America's families the support they need to weather this crisis.

In the end, that's all that people like the Secrests are looking for: the chance to work hard and to have that hard work translate into a good life for their children. Now I'm pleased to report that the Secrest story had a happy ending. It turned out that Gregory's two sons were eligible for SCHIP, and they are now fully covered, much to his relief and his wife's relief. I think Gregory put it best when he said: "Kids look at us and think that we will take of them." That's—every parent here has the experience. You look at your children and you know that they're looking back at you and they're saying, "You're going to take care of me, aren't you?" That's our job: to keep them healthy and to keep them safe and to let them dream as big as their dreams will take them.

And that's what I think about when I tuck my own girls into bed each night. And that's what I want for every child, every family in this Nation. That's why it's so important that Congress passes our recovery plan so we can get to work rebuilding America's health care system.

It won't be easy; it won't happen all at once. But this bill that I'm about to sign, that wasn't easy, either. It didn't happen all at once, either. And yet, here it is, waiting for me to sign. The bill I sign today is a critical first step. So I want to thank all of the State and local officials, all the advocates and ordinary Americans across this great country who fought so hard to get it passed. I want to personally thank every single Member of Congress who is here, a bipartisan group who worked tirelessly for so long that we could see this day. And I want you all to know that I am confident that if we work together, if we come together, we can finally achieve what generations of Americans have fought for and fulfill the promise of health care in our time.

So thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:56 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. H.R. 2, approved February 4, was assigned Public Law No. 111–3.

Remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast
February 5, 2009

Good morning. I want to thank the cochairs of this breakfast, Representatives Heath Shuler and Vernon Ehlers. And I also want to thank my good friend Tony Blair for coming today, somebody who did it first, and perhaps, did it better than I will do. He has been an

example for so many people around the world of what dedicated leadership can accomplish, and we are very grateful to him.

I want to thank my outstanding Vice President, Joe Biden, my wonderful members of the Cabinet, Members of Congress, clergy, friends, and dignitaries from across the world.

Michelle and I are honored to join you in this prayer breakfast. I know this breakfast has a long history in Washington, and faith has always been a guiding force in our family's life, so we feel very much at home and look forward to keeping this tradition alive during our time here.

It's a tradition that I'm told actually began many years ago in the city of Seattle. It was at the height of the Great Depression, and most people found themselves out of work. Many fell into poverty. Some lost everything.

The leaders of the community did all that they could for those who were suffering in their midst. And then they decided to do something more: They prayed. It didn't matter what party or religious affiliation to which they belonged, they simply gathered one morning as brothers and sisters to share a meal and talk with God.

And these breakfasts soon sprouted up throughout Seattle and quickly spread to cities and towns across America, eventually making their way to Washington. A short time after President Eisenhower asked a group of Senators if he could join their prayer breakfast, it became a national event. And today, as I see Presidents and dignitaries here from every corner of the globe, it strikes me that this is one of the rare occasions that still bring much of the world together in a moment of peace and good will.

I raise this history because far too often, we've seen faith wielded as a tool to divide us from one another, as an excuse for prejudice and intolerance. It's a theme that we heard from Tony. Wars have been waged; innocents have been slaughtered. For centuries, entire religions have been persecuted, all in the name of perceived righteousness.

There's no doubt that the very nature of faith means that some of our beliefs will never be the same. We read from different texts. We follow different edicts. We subscribe to different accounts of how we came to be here and where we are going next, and some subscribe to no faith at all. But no matter what we choose to believe, let us remember that there is no religion whose central tenet is hate. There's no God who condones taking the life of an innocent human being. This much we know. We know—[*applause*].

We know as well that whatever our differences, there is one law that binds all great religions together. And Tony and I did not coordinate here—there's a little serendipity—Jesus told us to "love thy neighbor as thyself." The Torah commands, "That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow." In Islam, there is the hadith that reads, "None of you truly believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself." The same is true for Buddhists and Hindus, for followers of Confucius and for humanists. It is, of course, the Golden Rule: the call to love one another; to understand one another; to treat with dignity and respect those with whom we share a brief moment on this Earth.

It is an ancient rule, a simple rule, but also perhaps the most challenging. For it asks each of us to take some measure of responsibility for the well-being of people we may not know, or worship with, or agree with on every issue or any issue. Sometimes it asks us to reconcile with bitter enemies or resolve ancient hatreds. And that requires a living, breathing, active faith. It requires us not only to believe, but to do, to give something of ourselves for the benefit of others and the betterment of our world.

In this way, the particular faith that motivates each of us can promote a greater good for all of us. Instead of driving us apart, our varied beliefs can bring us together to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, comfort the afflicted; to make peace where there is strife and rebuild what has broken; to lift up those who have fallen on hard times. This is not only our call as people of faith, but our duty as citizens of America and our duty as citizens of the world. And it will be the purpose of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships that I'm announcing later today.

The goal of this office will not be to favor one religious group over another, or even religious groups over secular groups. It will simply be to

work on behalf of those organizations that want to work on behalf of our communities and to do so without blurring the line that our Founders wisely drew between church and state. This work is important, because whether it's a secular group advising families facing foreclosure, or faith-based groups providing job training to those who need work, few are closer to what's happening on our streets and in our neighborhoods than these organizations. People trust them. Communities rely on them. And we will help them.

We will also reach out to leaders and scholars around the world to foster a more productive and peaceful dialog on faith. I'm not naive; I don't expect divisions to disappear overnight, nor do I believe that long-held views and conflicts will suddenly vanish. The work of Prime Minister Blair and the work of so many here underscores how difficult it can be to overcome our differences. But I do believe that if we can talk to one another openly and honestly, and if perhaps we allow God's grace to enter into that space that lies between us, then the old rifts will start to mend, new partnerships will begin to emerge. In a world that grows smaller by the day, perhaps we can begin to crowd out the destructive forces of excessive zealotry and make room for the healing power of understanding.

This is my hope; this is my prayer.

I believe this good is possible because my faith teaches me that all is possible, but I also believe because of what I have seen and what I have lived.

Prime Minister Blair shared a story of his awakening to his faith. Perhaps like him, I was not raised in a particularly religious household. I had a father who was born a Muslim but became an atheist, and grandparents who were non-practicing Methodists and Baptists, and a mother who was skeptical of organized religion, even though she was the kindest, most spiritual person I've ever known. She was the one who taught me as a child to love and to understand, and to do unto others as I would want done.

I didn't become a Christian until many years later, when I moved to the south side of Chicago after college. And it happened not because of indoctrination or a sudden revelation, but because I spent month after month working with church folks who simply wanted to help neighbors who were down on their luck, no matter what they looked like, or where they came from, or who they prayed to. It was on those streets, in those neighborhoods, that I first heard God's spirit beckon me. It was there that I felt called to a higher purpose, His purpose.

In different ways and in different forms, it is that spirit and sense of purpose that drew friends and neighbors to that first prayer breakfast in Seattle all those years ago, during another trying time for our Nation. It is what led friends and neighbors from so many faiths and nations here today. We come to break bread and to give thanks, but most of all to seek guidance and to rededicate ourselves to the mission of love and service that lies at the heart of all humanity. St. Augustine once said: "Pray as though everything depend on God, then work as though everything depended on you."

So let us pray together on this February morning, but let us also work together in all the days and months ahead. For it is only through common struggle and common effort, as brothers and sisters, that we fulfill our highest purpose as beloved children of God. I ask you to join me in that effort, and I also ask that you pray for myself, for Michelle, for my family, and for the continued perfection of our Nation.

Thank you so much. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:59 a.m. at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to former Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom, Quartet Representative in the Middle East.

Remarks at the Department of Energy
February 5, 2009

Thank you so much. Well, it is a thrill to be here. Thank you, Secretary Chu, for bringing your experience and expertise to this new role. And thanks to all of you who have done so much on behalf of the country each and every day here at the Department. You know, your mission is so important, and it's only going to grow as we transform the ways we produce energy and use energy, for the sake of our environment, for the sake of our security, and for the sake of our economy.

As we are meeting, in the Halls of Congress just down the street from here, there's a debate going on about the plan I've proposed, the American recovery and reinvestment plan.

This isn't some abstract debate. Last week, we learned that many of America's largest corporations are planning to lay off tens of thousands of workers. Today we learned that last week, the number of new unemployment claims jumped 600—jumped to 626,000. Tomorrow we're expecting another dismal jobs report on top of the 2.6 million jobs that we lost last year. We've lost half a million jobs each month for the last 2 months.

Now, I believe that legislation of such magnitude as has been proposed deserves the scrutiny that it has received over the last month. I think that's a good thing; that's the way democracy is supposed to work. But these numbers that we're seeing are sending an unmistakable message, and so are the American people. The time for talk is over. The time for action is now, because we know that if we do not act, a bad situation will become dramatically worse. Crisis could turn into catastrophe for families and businesses across the country.

And I refuse to let that happen. We can't delay and we can't go back to the same worn-out ideas that led us here in the first place. In the last few days, we've seen proposals arise from some in Congress that you may not have read but you'd be very familiar with because you've been hearing them for the last 10 years, maybe longer. They're rooted in the idea that tax cuts alone can solve all our problems; that government doesn't have a role to play; that half-measures and tinkering are somehow enough; that we can afford to ignore our most fundamental economic challenges: the crushing cost of health care, the inadequate state of so many of our schools, our dangerous dependence on foreign oil.

So let me be clear: Those ideas have been tested, and they have failed. They've taken us from surpluses to an annual deficit of over a trillion dollars, and they've brought our economy to a halt. And that's precisely what the election we just had was all about. The American people have rendered their judgment. And now is the time to move forward not back. Now is the time for action.

Just as past generations of Americans have done in trying times, we can and we must turn this moment of challenge into one of opportunity. The plan I've proposed has at its core a simple idea: Let's put Americans to work doing the work that America needs to be done.

This plan will save or create over 3 million jobs, almost all of them in the private sector. This plan will put people to work rebuilding our crumbling roads and bridges, our dangerously deficient dams and levees. This plan will put people to work modernizing our health care system, not only saving us billions of dollars, but countless lives. This plan will put people to work renovating more than 10,000 schools, giving millions of children the chance to learn in 21st century classrooms, libraries, and labs. And to all the scientists in the room today, you know what that means for America's future. This plan will provide sensible tax relief for the struggling middle class, unemployment insurance and continuing health care coverage for those who've lost their jobs, and it will help prevent our States and local communities from laying off firefighters and teachers and police. And finally, this plan will begin to end the tyranny of oil in our time.

After decades of dragging our feet, this plan will finally spark the creation of a clean energy industry that will create hundreds of thousands of jobs over the next few years—manufacturing wind turbines and solar cells, for

example—millions more after that. These jobs and these investments will double our capacity to generate renewable energy over the next few years.

We'll fund a better, smarter electricity grid and train workers to build it, a grid that will help us ship wind and solar power from one end of this country to another. Think about it. The grid that powers the tools of modern life—computers, appliances, even BlackBerrys—[*laughter*]—looks largely the same as it did half a century ago. Just these first steps towards modernizing the way we distribute electricity could reduce consumption by 2 to 4 percent.

We'll also lead a revolution in energy efficiency, modernizing more than 75 percent of Federal buildings and improving the efficiency of more than 2 million American homes. This will not only create jobs, it will cut the Federal energy bill by a third and save taxpayers $2 billion each year and save Americans billions of dollars more on their utility bills.

In fact, as part of this effort, today I've signed a Presidential memorandum requesting that the Department of Energy set new efficiency standards for common household appliances. This will save consumers money, this will spur innovation, and this will conserve tremendous amounts of energy. We'll save through these simple steps over the next 30 years the amount of energy produced over a 2-year period by all the coal-fired power plants in America.

And through investments in our mass transit system to boost capacity, in our roads to reduce congestion, and in technologies that will accelerate the development of innovations like plug-in hybrid vehicles, we'll be making a significant down payment on a cleaner and more energy independent future.

Now, I read the other day that critics of this plan ridiculed our notion that we should use part of the money to modernize the entire fleet of Federal vehicles to take advantage of state-of-the-art fuel efficiency. This is what they called pork. You know the truth: It will not only save the Government significant money over time, it will not only create manufacturing jobs for folks who are making these cars, it will set a standard for private industry to match. And so when you hear these attacks deriding something of such obvious importance as this, you have to ask yourself, are these folks serious? Is it any wonder that we haven't had a real energy policy in this country?

For the last few years, I've talked about these issues with Americans from one end of this country to another. And Washington may not be ready to get serious about energy independence, but I am. And so are you, and so are the American people.

Inaction is not an option that is acceptable to me, and it's certainly not acceptable to the American people, not on energy, not on the economy, not at this critical moment.

So I am calling on all the Members of Congress, Democrats and Republicans, House and Senate, to rise to this moment. No plan is perfect. There have been constructive changes made to this one over the last several weeks. I would love to see additional improvements today. But the scale and the scope of this plan is the right one. Our approach to energy is the right one. It's what America needs right now, and we need to move forward today. We can't keep on having the same old arguments over and over again that lead us to the exact same spot where we are wasting previous energy, we're not creating jobs, we're failing to compete in the global economy, and we end up bickering at a time when the economy urgently needs action.

I thank all of you for being here, and I'm eager to work with Secretary Chu and all of you as we stand up to meet the challenges of this new century. That's what the American people are looking for. That's what I expect out of Congress. That's what I believe we can deliver to our children and our grandchildren in their future.

Thank you so much, everybody. I appreciate it. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:12 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Energy Steven Chu.

Remarks at the House Democratic Caucus Issues Conference in Williamsburg, Virginia

February 5, 2009

The President. Thank you, Democrats. Thank you. Please, everybody have a seat, everybody have a seat. It is great to be here with so many friends. Thank you for giving me a reason to use Air Force One. [*Laughter*] It's pretty nice. [*Laughter*]

I'm glad to see the House Democratic Caucus is getting by just fine without my Chief of Staff. [*Laughter*] I don't know how many of you were at the Alfalfa dinner, but I pointed out, you know, this whole myth of Rahm being this tough guy, mean, is just not true. At least once a week he spends time teaching profanity to underprivileged children. [*Laughter*] So he's got a soft spot.

I want to thank John Larson for inviting me here tonight. This is John's first conference as chairman of the Democratic caucus, so we're both new at this. John, congratulations.

I want to acknowledge the great Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi. She is a rock who has proven to be an extraordinary leader for the American people. And I want to thank Nancy and Steny Hoyer and Jim Clyburn and the entire caucus—Xavier Becerra, all the leadership working so hard, all the chairmen like David Obey, who've worked so hard in passing an economic recovery plan that is so desperately needed for our country.

All of you acted with a discipline that matches the urgency and the gravity of the crisis that we face, because you know what's at stake. Every weekend, you go home to your districts and you see factories that are closing and small businesses shutting their doors. You hear from families losing their homes, students that can't pay their tuition, seniors who are worrying about whether they can retire with dignity or see their kids and grandkids lead a better life.

So you went to work, and you did your job. For that, you have my appreciation and admiration. And more importantly, you've got the American people's thanks, because they know it is time to get something done here in Washington.

As we meet here tonight, we know that there's more work to be done. The Senate is still acting. And after it has its final vote, we still need to resolve differences between the House and Senate bills. So we're going to still have to work, and I am going to urge you to complete that work without delay. And I know that Nancy and Steny, all the rest of the leadership is committed to making that happen.

Now, I just want to say this: I value the constructive criticism and the healthy debate that's taken place around this package, because that's the essence, the foundation of American democracy. That's how the Founders set it up. They set it up to make big change hard. It wasn't supposed to be easy. That's part of the reason why we've got such a stable Government—is because no one party, no one individual, can simply dictate the terms of the debate. I don't think any of us have cornered the market on wisdom, or that—do I believe that good ideas are the province of any party. The American people know that our challenges are great. They're not expecting Democratic solutions or Republican solutions; they want American solutions. And I've said that same thing to the public, and I've said that, in a gesture of friendship and good will, to those who have disagreed with me on aspects of this plan.

But what I have also said is, don't come to the table with the same tired arguments and worn ideas that helped to create this crisis. You know, all of us here are imperfect. And everything we do and everything I do is subject to improvement. My Michelle reminds me every day how imperfect I am. [*Laughter*] So I welcome this debate. But come on, we are not going to get relief by turning back to the very same policies that for the last 8 years doubled the national debt and threw our economy into a tailspin.

We can't embrace the losing formula that says only tax cuts will work for every problem we face, that ignores critical challenges like our addiction to foreign oil, or the soaring cost of health care, or falling schools and crumbling

bridges and roads and levees. I don't care whether you're driving a hybrid or an SUV, if you're headed for a cliff, you've got to change direction. That's what the American people called for in November, and that's what we intend to deliver.

So the American people are watching. They did not send us here to get bogged down with the same old delay, the same old distractions, the same talking points, the same cable chatter. You know, I mean, aren't you all tired of that stuff?

Audience members. Yes! Let's go to work.

The President. They did not vote for the false theories of the past, and they didn't vote for phony arguments and petty politics. They didn't vote for the status quo; they sent us here to bring change. We owe it to them to deliver. This is the moment for leadership that matches the great test of our times, and I know you want to work with me to get there.

Now, if we do not move swiftly to sign the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act into law, an economy that is already in crisis will be faced with catastrophe. This is not my assessment. This is not Nancy Pelosi's assessment. This is the assessment of the best economists in the country. This is the assessment of some of the former advisers of some of the same folks who are making these criticisms right now.

Millions more Americans will lose their jobs. Homes will be lost. Families will go without health care. Our crippling dependence on foreign oil will continue. That is the price of inaction.

This isn't some abstract debate. Last week, we learned that many of America's largest corporations already laid off thousands and are planning to lay off tens of thousands of more workers. Today we learned that in the previous week, the number of new unemployment claims jumped to 626,000. Tomorrow we're expecting another dismal jobs report, on top of the half a million jobs that were lost last month, on top of the half a million jobs that were lost the month before that, on top of the 2.6 million jobs that were lost last year.

For you, these aren't just statistics. This is not a game; this is not a contest for who is in power and who's up and who's down. These are your constituents. These are families you know and you care about. I believe that it is important for us to set aside some of the gamesmanship in this town and get something done.

Now, I believe—[*applause*]—I just want to repeat, because I don't want any confusion here—I believe that legislation of this enormous magnitude, that by necessity we are moving quickly; we're not moving quickly, because we're trying to jamb something down people's throats. We're moving quickly because we're told that if we don't move quickly, that the economy is going keep on getting worse, and we'll have another 2 or 3 or 4 million jobs lost this year.

I'd love to be leisurely about this. My staff is worn out, working around the clock. So is David Obey's staff. So is Nancy Pelosi's staff. We're not doing this because we think this is a lark. We're doing this because people are counting on us. So legislation of this magnitude deserves the scrutiny that it's received, and all of you will get another chance to vote for this bill in the days to come. But I urge all of us not to make the perfect the enemy of the absolutely necessary.

Understand the scale and the scope of this plan is right. And when you start hearing arguments on the cable chatter, just understand a couple of things. Number one, when they say, "Well, why are we spending 800 billion? We've got this huge deficit?" First of all, I found this deficit when I showed up. Number one, I found this national debt doubled, wrapped in a big bow waiting for me as I stepped into the Oval Office.

Number two, it is expected that we are going to lose about a trillion dollars worth of demand this year, a trillion dollars of demand next year because of the contraction in the economy. So the reason that this has to be big is to try to fill some of that lost demand. And as it is, there are many who think that we should be doing even more. So we are taking prudent steps.

But you talk to Ted Strickland and what's happening in Ohio, and you ask him whether they need some relief in terms of the

unemployment insurance rates that are going sky-high, and him having to pick up all kinds of folks who are suddenly seeking food stamps who had been working all their lives, and he'll tell you that this not something that we're just doing to grow Government. We're doing this because this is what the best minds tell us needs to be done. That's point number one.

Point number two: When they start talking about, well, we need more tax cuts, we started this package with a healthy amount of tax cuts in the mix, recognizing that some tax cuts can be very beneficial, particularly if they're going to middle class and working families that will spend that money. That's not me talking; that's the economists talking, who insisted that they're most likely to spend and get that money into circulation and stimulate the economy.

Now, in fact, when we announced the bill, you remember—this is only about, what, 2 weeks ago, when we announced the framework? And we were complimented by Republicans, saying, "Boy, this is a balanced package; we're pleasantly surprised." And suddenly, what was a balanced package needs to be put out of balance. Don't buy those arguments.

Then there's the argument, "Well, this is full of pet projects." When was the last time that we saw a bill of this magnitude move out with no earmarks in it? Not one. And when they—when you start asking, "Well, what is it exactly that is such a problem that you're seeing? Where's all this waste and spending?" Well, you know, you want to replace the Federal fleet with hybrid cars. Well, why wouldn't we want to do that? [*Laughter*] That creates jobs for people who make those cars. It saves the Federal Government energy. It saves the taxpayers energy.

So then I—then you get the argument, "Well, this is not a stimulus bill, this is a spending bill." What do you think a stimulus is? [*Laughter*] That's the whole point. No, seriously. [*Laughter*] That's the point.

So, I mean, I get carried away. [*Laughter*] We've got to leave some time for questions and answers. Here's the point I'm making: This package is not going to be absolutely perfect, and you can nit and you can pick, and that's the game we all play here. We know how to play that game. What I'm saying is, now we can't afford to play that game. We've got to pull together.

There are going to be some things that don't get included that each of us would like to see included. All of us are going to have to make some sacrifices. And we have to accommodate the interests of a range of people. And the House is going to have to work with the Senate. But let's think big right now. Let's not think small. Let's not think narrowly.

Just as past generations of Americans have done in trying times, we can and must turn this moment of challenge into one of opportunity. The plan that you've passed has at its core a simple idea: Let's put Americans to work doing the work that America needs done.

So this plan will save or create over 3 million jobs, almost all of them in the private sector. This plan will put people to work rebuilding our crumbling roads and bridges, our dangerously deficient dams and levees. This plan will put people to work modernizing our health care system. That doesn't just save us billions of dollars; it saves countless lives, because we'll reduce medical errors. This plan will put people to work renovating more than 10,000 schools, giving millions of children the chance to learn in 21st century classrooms and libraries and labs, creating new scientists for a new future.

This plan will provide sensible tax relief for the struggling middle class and unemployment insurance and continued health care coverage for those who've lost their jobs. And it will help prevent our States and local communities—it will help Governor Ritter and Governor Strickland not have to lay off firefighters and teachers and police. Because when they get laid off, not only do we lose services, but maybe they can't make payments on their home. Maybe they get foreclosed on, and the economy goes down further.

And finally, this plan will begin to end the tyranny of oil in our time: doubles our capacity to generate alternative sources of energy, like wind and solar and biofuels. And it does it in 3 years, saves taxpayers billions of dollars, makes Federal buildings more efficient, saves the average working family hundreds of dollars on their energy bills. After decades of empty

rhetoric, that's the downpayment that we need on energy independence.

Now, there's a lot about running for President that is tough. Especially, I don't miss sleeping in motels and hotels, and I don't miss not being with my kids as much as I'd like. But the best thing about being a candidate—and all of you know this because those Members of Congress who are here, you've run, you know what it's like—you get to see the country. You get to know the character of the American people. Over the last 2 years, I visited almost all 50 States. I've got to admit, the one I missed was Alaska. [*Laughter*] We're going to get there. I've been in so many of your districts. I've passed through towns and cities farms and factories. And I know what you know: People are hurting. I've looked in their eyes. I've heard their stories. I've sensed their deep frustration.

And they're just hoping that we're working for them. They're so strong, and they're so decent, the American people, and those struggles haven't diminished that strength and that decency. And we hold in our hands the capacity to do great things on their behalf. But we're going to have to do it by not thinking about ourselves, not thinking about how does this position me, how am I looking. And we're going to have to just think about how are we delivering for them.

It starts with this economic recovery plan. And soon, we'll take on the big issues like addressing the foreclosure problem by passing a budget, tackling our fiscal problems, fixing our financial regulation, securing our country. And we won't approach these challenges just as Democrats, because we remember the look in the eyes of our constituents. We know even though they've been cynical, that they're thinking, maybe this time is going to be different. They know we've got to overcome all these problems as Americans. And that's why we have to work in a serious, substantive, and civil way, and we will keep working to build bipartisan support for action.

And I promise you that my door is always open, and my administration will consult closely with each and every one of you, the people's representatives, as we take on these pressing priorities.

And already, you've made a difference. Nancy mentioned—I'm so proud of that day that we signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act—to see Lilly Ledbetter on the stage, representing the American people, representing all the women out there who want their daughters to have the same opportunities as our sons. And then we signed children's health insurance to provide coverage for 11 million and make a downpayment on comprehensive health care reform.

And it wasn't easy. You worked hard to make it happen, which means we can work hard to make sure that we've got jobs all across America and energy independence all across America. And we will not stop until we deliver for our constituents.

That's what the Democratic Party is all about. That's what this caucus is all about. That's what my Presidency is all about.

Thank you, guys. I love you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:28 p.m. at the Kingsmill Resort and Spa. In his remarks, he referred to White House Chief of Staff Rahm I. Emanuel; Gov. Theodore Strickland of Ohio; Gov. William A. Ritter, Jr., of Colorado; and Lilly Ledbetter, former employee, Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company plant in Gadsden, AL. He also referred to Public Law No. 111–2, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009; and Public Law No. 111–3, the Children's Health Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2009.

Remarks on the Establishment of the President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board

February 6, 2009

The President. Thank you. Please have a seat. Good morning, everybody.

Audience members. Good morning.

The President. I have just had the opportunity to welcome the members of my Economic Recovery Advisory Board. And I'm grateful that I will have the counsel of these extraordinarily talented and experienced men and women in the challenging months to come.

If there's anyone, anywhere, who doubts the need for wise counsel and bold and immediate action, just consider the very troubling news we received just this morning. Last month, another 600,000 Americans lost their jobs. That is the single worst month of job loss in 35 years. The Department of Labor also adjusted their job loss numbers for 2008 upwards and now report that we've lost 3.6 million jobs since this recession began.

That's 3.6 million Americans who wake up every day wondering how they are going to pay their bills, stay in their homes, and provide for their children. That's 3.6 million Americans who need our help.

I'm sure that at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, Members of the Senate are reading these same numbers this morning. And I hope they share my sense of urgency and draw the same, unmistakable conclusion: The situation could not be more serious. These numbers demand action. It is inexcusable and irresponsible for any of us to get bogged down in distraction, delay, or politics as usual, while millions of Americans are being put out of work.

Now is the time for Congress to act. It's time to pass an economic recovery and reinvestment plan to get our economy moving.

This is not some abstract debate. It is an urgent and growing crisis that can only be fully understood through the unseen stories that lie underneath each and every one of those 600,000 jobs that were lost this month. Somewhere in America, a small business has shut its doors; somewhere in America, a family has said goodbye to their home; somewhere in America, a young parent has lost their livelihood, and they don't know what's going to take its place.

These Americans are counting on us, all of us in Washington. We have to remember that we're here to work for them. And if we drag our feet and fail to act, this crisis could turn into a catastrophe. We'll continue to get devastating job reports like today's, month after month, year after year. It's very important to understand that, although we had a terrible year with respect to jobs last year, the problem is accelerating not decelerating. It's getting worse not getting better. Almost half of the jobs that were lost have been lost just in the last couple of months.

These aren't my assessments; these are the assessments of independent economists. If we don't do anything, millions more jobs will be lost. More families will lose their homes. More Americans will go without health care. We'll continue to send our children to crumbling schools and be crippled by our dependence on foreign oil. That's the result of inaction. And it's not acceptable to the American people.

They did not choose more of the same in November. They did not send us to Washington to get stuck in partisan posturing, to try to score political points. They did not send us here to turn back to the same tried-and-failed approaches that were rejected, because we saw the results. They sent us here to make change, with the expectation that we would act.

Now, I have repeatedly acknowledged that, given the magnitude and the difficulties of the problem we're facing, there are no silver bullets, and there are no easy answers. The bill that's emerged from Congress is not perfect, but a bill is absolutely necessary. We can continue to improve and refine both the House and Senate versions of these bills. There may be provisions in there that need to be left out; there may be some provisions that need to be added. But broadly speaking, the package is the right size, it is the right scope, and it has the right priorities to create 3 to 4 million jobs and to do it in a way that lays the groundwork for

long-term growth, by fixing our schools, modernizing our health care to lower costs, repair our roads and bridges and levees and other vital infrastructure, move us towards energy independence. That is what America needs. It will take months, even years, to renew our economy, but every day that Washington fails to act, that recovery is delayed.

Now, we also know that no single act can meet the challenges of this moment. This process is just the beginning of a long journey back to progress and growth and prosperity. Given the scope of this crisis, we'll need all hands on deck to figure out how we are going to move forward. And I'm pleased to have an extraordinary team of folks in my administration: Tim Geithner at Treasury, Larry Summers, Christina Romer, Peter Orszag. They're all here in the White House. I also want to be sure that we're tapping a broad and diverse range of opinion from across the country, because a historic crisis demands a historic response. And that's why we took the unique step of creating the new institution whose members have gathered here today.

Put simply, I created this board to enlist voices to come from beyond the Washington echo chamber, to ensure that no stone is unturned as we work to put people back to work and get our economy moving.

Within this group, you've got leaders of manufacturing and leaders of finance. You've got labor, and you've got management. You've got people who work in small businesses and people who work in large businesses. You've got some economists and some folks who think they're economists. [*Laughter*] By the way, these days everybody thinks they're an economist. [*Laughter*] We will meet regularly so that I can hear different ideas and sharpen my own and seek counsel that is candid and informed by the wider world.

The board is headed by Paul Volcker—not only because he's the tallest among us—[*laughter*]—but because, by any measure, he is one of the world's foremost experts on the economy, one of the most experienced and insightful economic minds that we have. He's advised me for many months. He has helped steer the American economy through many twists and turns. Probably, prior to this one, the worst economic crisis we had back in the early eighties, it was Paul Volcker who helped restore confidence and pull us out of that extraordinarily difficult time.

So I'm glad that Paul has decided to continue his public service at this critical moment. Assisting Paul and the rest of the board will be Austan Goolsbee, who's been one of my closest economic advisers, one of the finest young economists that we have in the country. And he's going to ensure that we are making the best possible use of this unique resource.

I'm not interested in groupthink, which is why the board reflects a broad cross-section of experience and expertise and ideology. We've recruited Republicans and Democrats, people who come out of the Government as well as the private sector. Not everyone is going to agree with each other, and not all of them are going to agree with me. And that's precisely the point, because we want to ensure that our policies have the benefit of independent thought and vigorous debate.

And we're also going to count on these men and women to serve as additional eyes and ears for me as we work to reverse this downturn. Many of them have ground-level views of the changes that are taking place, as they work across different sectors of the economy and different regions of the country, and they can help us see the trends that are not fully formed, the trouble that may be on the horizon, and the opportunities that have yet to be seized. I look forward to relying on their input and recommendations on specific questions as we jump-start job creation and pursue strong and stable economic growth.

This new institution should send a signal of how seriously I take the responsibility of building an economic recovery that is broad and enduring. These are extraordinary times. And for far too many Americans, the future is filled with unanswered questions: Can I get a job? Will my family be able to stay in their home? Will I be able to retire with dignity and see my children lead a better life? And these are the questions that we will answer affirmatively during the course of this administration.

We are going to create the jobs that our people need and the future that this great Nation deserves. Those are the challenges that I've put before my economic team, and these distinguished advisers will be tackling those same issues in the months and years to come.

So I'm grateful to them. And before I officially sign this Executive order, I would like Paul just to say a quick word.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:58 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner; Lawrence H. Summers, Director, National Economic Council; Christina D. Romer, Chair, Council of Economic Advisers; Peter R. Orszag, Director, Office of Management and Budget; and Austan Goolsbee, staff director and chief economist, President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks by Paul A. Volcker, Chairman, President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board. The Executive order establishing the President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's Weekly Address
February 7, 2009

Yesterday began with some devastating news with regard to our economic crisis. But I'm pleased to say it ended on a more positive note.

In the morning, we received yet another round of alarming employment figures, the worst in more than 30 years. Another 600,000 jobs were lost in January. We've now lost more than 3.6 million jobs since this recession began.

But by the evening, Democrats and Republicans came together in the Senate and responded appropriately to the urgency this moment demands.

In the midst of our greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression, the American people were hoping that Congress would begin to confront the great challenges we face. That was, after all, what last November's election was all about.

Legislation of such magnitude deserves the scrutiny that it's received over the last month, and it will receive more in the days to come. But we can't afford to make perfect the enemy of the absolutely necessary. The scale and scope of this plan is right. And the time for action is now, because if we don't move swiftly to put this plan in motion, our economic crisis could become a national catastrophe. Millions of Americans will lose their jobs, their homes, and their health care. Millions more will have to put their dreams on hold.

Let's be clear: We can't expect relief from the tired old theories that, in eight short years, doubled the national debt, threw our economy into a tailspin, and led us into this mess in the first place. We can't rely on a losing formula that offers only tax cuts as the answer to all our problems while ignoring our fundamental economic challenges: the crushing cost of health care or the inadequate state of so many schools; our addiction to foreign oil or our crumbling roads, bridges, and levees.

The American people know that our challenges are great. They don't expect Democratic solutions or Republican solutions; they expect American solutions.

From the beginning, this recovery plan has had at its core a simple idea: Let's put Americans to work doing the work America needs done. It will save or create more than 3 million jobs over the next 2 years, all across the country—16,000 in Maine, nearly 80,000 in Indiana, almost all of them in the private sector, and all of them jobs that help us recover today and prosper tomorrow.

Jobs that upgrade classrooms and laboratories in 10,000 schools nationwide—at least 485 in Florida alone—and train an army of teachers in math and science. Jobs that modernize our health care system, not only saving us billions of dollars, but countless lives. Jobs that construct a smart electric grid, connect every corner of the country to the information superhighway, double our capacity to generate renewable energy, and grow the economy of tomorrow. Jobs that

rebuild our crumbling roads, bridges and levees and dams, so that the tragedies of New Orleans and Minneapolis never happen again.

It includes immediate tax relief for our struggling middle class in places like Ohio, where 4.5 million workers will receive a tax cut of up to $1,000. It protects health insurance and provides unemployment insurance for those who've lost their jobs. And it helps our States and communities avoid painful tax hikes or layoffs for our teachers, nurses, and first responders.

That's what is at stake with this plan: putting Americans back to work, creating transformative economic change, and making a down payment on the American Dream that serves our children and our children's children for generations to come.

Americans across this country are struggling, and they are watching to see if we're equal to the task before us. Let's show them that we are. And let's do whatever it takes to keep the promise of America alive in our time.

Thank you.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 1:30 p.m. on February 6 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on February 7. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 6 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 7.

Remarks on Economic Stabilization and a Question-and-Answer Session in Elkhart, Indiana
February 9, 2009

The President. Thank you. Thank you so much. Well listen, everybody can have a seat. Make yourselves comfortable, we're going to be here a while.

It is good to be back in Elkhart, and it's good to be back in Indiana. You know, the last event we had on the campaign was Indiana. And the first time that I'm traveling outside of the White House to talk about the economy is back in Indiana.

And I want to start by thanking Ed for coming here today and sharing his family's story with all of us. Ed was terrific; give him a big round of applause.

There are a few other special guests that I just want to acknowledge very quickly. First of all, your own Senator, my former colleague, a outstanding legislator and public servant, former Governor here in Indiana; give it up for Senator Evan Bayh. Where is he? Where is Evan? There he is.

A guy you may be familiar with, your own Member of Congress, Joe Donnelly. We brought a few other Members of Congress here to get in on the fun: Representative Baron Hill; Representative Brad Ellsworth; Representative Fred Upton; Representative André Carson; former Representative Tim Roemer; former Representative Lee Hamilton. We've got Mayor Dick Moore of Elkhart. And we've got the new Secretary of Transportation, a former Member of Congress from my own home State of Illinois, Ray LaHood.

I don't know if you guys have been noticing, but we've had a little debate in Washington—[*laughter*]—over the last week or two about the economy. And, you know, we tend to take the measure of the economic crisis we face in numbers and statistics. But when we say that we've lost 3.6 million jobs since this recession began, nearly 600,000 in the past month alone; when we say that this area has lost jobs faster than anywhere else in the United States of America, with an unemployment rate of over 15 percent, when it was 4.7 percent just last year; when we talk about layoffs at companies like Monaco Coach and Keystone RV and Pilgrim International, companies that have sustained this community for years, we're not just talking numbers, we're talking about Ed. We're talking about people in the audience here today—people not just in Elkhart, but all across this country. We're talking about people who have lost their livelihood and don't know what will take its place.

We're talking about parents who've lost their health care and lie awake at night, praying their kids don't get sick. We're talking about families who've lost the home that was the corner—their foundation for their American Dream. Young people who put that college acceptance letter back in the envelope because they just can't afford it. That's what those numbers and statistics mean. That is the true measure of this economic crisis.

Those are the stories I heard when I came to Elkhart 6 months ago, and those are the stories that I carried with me to the White House. I have not forgotten them. And I promised you back then that if elected I'd do everything I could to help this community recover, and that's why I came back today, because I intend to keep my promise.

I intend to keep my promise. But you know, the work is going to be hard. I don't want to lie to people—that's why we're having a town hall meeting—because the situation we face could not be more serious. We have inherited an economic crisis as deep and as dire as any since the Great Depression.

Economists from across the spectrum have warned that if we don't act immediately, millions of more jobs will be lost. The national unemployment rates will approach double digits, not just here in Elkhart, all across the country. More people will lose their homes and their health care. And our Nation will sink into a crisis that at some point we may be unable to reverse.

So we can't afford to wait. We can't wait and see and hope for the best. We can't posture and bicker and resort to the same failed ideas that got us into this mess in the first place. That was what this election was all about. The American people rejected those ideas because they hadn't worked. You didn't send us to Washington because you were hoping for more of the same; you sent us there to change things; the expectation that we would act quickly and boldly to carry out change. And that's exactly what I intend to do as President of the United States of America.

That's why I put forth a recovery and reinvestment plan that is now before Congress. At its core is a very simple idea: to put Americans back to work doing the work America needs to be done. Ed said it better than anybody could. He said, look, folks in Elkhart, they want to work. Nobody is looking for a handout. Everybody just wants to be able to get a job that supports a family. And we've got the most productive workers on Earth. We've got the best workers right here in Elkhart, who are willing to put hard time and do whatever it takes to make sure a company succeeds. But they've got to have a chance.

The plan that we put forward will save or create 3 to 4 million jobs over the next 2 years. But not just any jobs, jobs that meet the needs we've neglected for far too long, jobs that lay the groundwork for long-term economic growth; jobs fixing our schools and computerizing medical records to save costs and save lives; jobs repairing our roads and our bridges and our levees; jobs investing in renewable energy to help us move towards energy independence.

And the plan also calls for immediate tax relief for 95 percent of American workers, so that you who are being pinched, even if you still have a job, with rising costs while your wages and incomes are flatlined, you'll actually have a little bit of extra money at the end of the month to buy the necessities for you and your children.

Now, I know that some of you might be thinking: "Well, all that sounds good, but when are we going to see any of this here in Elkhart? What does all this mean to my family, to my community?" And those are exactly the kinds of questions you should be asking your President and your Government. And today I want to provide some answers, and I want to be as specific as I can.

Number one, this plan will provide for extended unemployment insurance, health care, and—[*applause*]—other assistance for workers and families who have lost their jobs in this recession. So if you've lost your job, for example, under existing law you can get COBRA. Some of you have heard of COBRA, but the only problem is, it's so expensive, it doesn't do you any good. So what we've said is we will help subsidize people so that they can keep—at least keep their health insurance while they're out there looking for a new job.

This plan will also—and what this means is, from the perspective of unemployment insurance, you will have an additional $100 per month in unemployment benefits that will go to more than 450,000 Indiana workers, extended unemployment benefits for another 89,000 folks who've been laid off and can't find work, and job training assistance to help more than 51,000 people here get back on their feet.

Now, that's not just our moral responsibility to lend a helping hand to our fellow Americans at a time of emergency, it makes good economic sense. If you don't have money, you can't spend it. And if you don't spend it, our economy will continue to decline.

Now, for that same reason, the plan includes badly needed tax relief for middle class workers and families, folks all across the country under siege. We need to give you more of the money you've earned so that you can spend it and pay your bills. Under our plan, families—working families will get a thousand dollars, providing relief for nearly 2.5 million workers and their families here in Indiana. The plan also will provide a partially refundable $2,500 per student tax credit to help 76,000 Hoosier families send their kids to college. This will benefit your household budgets in the short run, and it will benefit America in the long run.

But providing tax relief and college assistance and helping folks who have lost their jobs, that's not enough. A real recovery plan helps create more jobs and put people back to work. And that's why between the investments our plan makes, and the tax relief for small business it provides, we'll create or save nearly 80,000 badly needed jobs for Indiana right here over the next couple of years.

Now, you may have heard some of the critics of our plan say it would create mostly government jobs. That is not true. Ninety percent—more than 90 percent of the jobs created under this recovery act will be in the private sector; more than 90 percent. But it's not just the jobs that will benefit Indiana and the rest of America, it's the work people will be doing, rebuilding our roads, our bridges, our dams, our levees; roads like U.S. 31 here in Indiana—that Hoosiers can count on—that connects small towns and rural communities to opportunities for economic growth. And I know that a new overpass downtown would make a big difference for businesses and families right here in Elkhart.

We'll also put people to work rebuilding our schools. This school is a terrific school, but I know there's work to be done here. We should do it so that all our children can have the world-class classrooms—the labs, the libraries—that we—they need in order to compete in today's global economy.

We should be investing in clean alternative sources of energy. We should be investing in the electric grid we need to transport this new energy from coast to coast. So if you build a windmill here in Indiana and it generates energy, that energy can get to Chicago and can get to St. Louis and can get to other places all across the country.

We can help make Indiana an energy-producing State, not just an energy-consuming State. The plan calls for weatherizing homes across Indiana; installing state-of-the-art equipment that help you control your energy costs; building new, high-speed broadband lines; reaching schools and small businesses in rural Indiana so they can connect and compete with their counterparts in any city of any country in the world.

Those are the kinds of projects that we're looking at, that put people to work, that allow us to train people for jobs that pay a living wage, and that end up being a gift that keeps on giving, because not only are we creating jobs now, but we're creating the infrastructure for the jobs of the future.

Now, let me be clear: I'm not going to tell you that this bill is perfect. It's coming out of Washington, it's going through Congress—[*laughter*]—you know. Look, it's not perfect, but it is the right size, it is the right scope. Broadly speaking, it has the right priorities to create jobs that will jump-start our economy and transform this economy for the 21st century.

I can't tell you with a hundred percent certainty that every single item in this plan will work exactly as we hoped. But what I can tell you is, I can say with complete confidence that

endless delay or paralysis in Washington in the face of this crisis will only bring deepening disaster. I can tell you that doing nothing is not an option.

So we've had a good debate. Now it's time to act. That's why I'm calling on Congress to pass this bill immediately. Folks here in Elkhart and all across America need help right now. They can't afford to keep waiting for folks in Washington to get this done.

Even with this plan, the road ahead won't be easy. This crisis has been a long time in the making. We're not going to turn it around overnight. Recovery will likely be measured in years, not weeks or months. But we also know that our economy will be stronger for generations to come if we commit ourselves to the work that needs to be done—commit ourselves today to the work that needs to be done.

And being here in Elkhart, I am more confident than ever that we will get where we need to be, because I know people are struggling, but I also know that folks here are good workers and good neighbors, who step up, who help each other out, who make sacrifices when times are tough. I know that all folks here are asking for is a chance to work hard and to have that work translate into a decent life for you and your family. So I know you're going to be doing your part. I think it's about time that Government did its part too. That's what this recovery plan is all about. That's why I hope it passes as soon as possible, so we can start creating jobs and helping families, and turning our economy around.

Thank you, Elkhart. Thank you.

Thank you. All right. Thank you. All right, we're going to take questions. All right, I just want to make sure my mike is working here. Here's the deal on questions: First of all, we didn't screen anybody. So there's some people who like me in the audience, some people who don't. Some people agree with me, some people who don't. It doesn't matter. We want to take questions from everybody.

Here's the only thing I've got to ask, though. I would ask that everybody raise their hand—not right now. People who had a question, raise your hand. We're going to try to call on people, I'm going to try to go around the room. We may not get to every single question, so don't be mad at me. We've got a lot of people here. We've got about 35 minutes—40 minutes, so I'm going to try to get as many questions as possible, which means try to keep your question relatively succinct, and I will try to keep my answer relatively succinct. We've got young people in the audience who have microphones, so wait until the microphone gets to you. And if you could introduce yourself, that will be helpful. And the last thing I'm going to do is I'm going to go girl, boy, girl, boy, so that nobody gets mad at me.

All right. This young lady right here, she's number one, right here.

Economic Stabilization Legislation

Q. Thank you. And, President Obama, we welcome you to Elkhart with our whole heart.

The President. Thank you.

Q. You are just—we are so grateful that you've come here today.

The President. Thank you.

Q. My question to you is, sir, when you allocate the money for Elkhart, Indiana, will it come directly into Elkhart? Or where—is it going to have to go around somewhere else?

The President. Well, first of all, what's your name?

Q. My name is Helen Castillo.

The President. Okay, thank you, Helen. It's a good question. Look, we've got to get the bill passed. But we also have to make sure that the money is well spent, which means we're doing some things that are unprecedented to make sure that the money gets out quickly, but it gets out wisely.

We're going to set up an independent board made up of Democrats and Republicans to review how the money is being spent, because we've got to make sure that it's not being wasted on somebody's special project that may not actually create help for people. So that's point number one.

Point number two is we're actually going to set up something called recovery.gov. This is going to be a special website that we set up that gives you a report on where the money is going in your community, how it's being spent, how many jobs it's being created, so that all of you

can be the eyes and ears. And if you see that a project is not working the way it's supposed to, you'll be able to get on that website and say, "You know, I thought this was supposed to be going to school construction, but I haven't noticed any changes being made." And that will help us track how this money is being spent.

Now, in terms of how it's being utilized and who it's going to, it's probably going to depend on different aspects of the plan. Some of the plan will go to the State government because, for example—well, let me give you an example. Unemployment insurance is run through the State, not run through a city, and so that part of the plan will be going through the State.

There are going to be other projects having to do with transportation, for example, in which we may be working directly with local municipalities and communities as well as the State government to make sure that the project is well planned. And that's why we've got Secretary LaHood here, because he's going to be working with the local communities.

The same is true on education funding. We may be working directly with the school superintendent, who I know is here, to figure out where are the schools that are in most need of help and where we can right away get some construction going and get some improvements going. So it'll probably depend on what stream of money we're talking about, but the key is we're going to have strong oversight and strong transparency to make sure that this money is well spent.

And listen, I know that there are a lot of folks out there who have been saying, "Oh, this is pork and this is money that's going to be wasted and et cetera, et cetera." Understand: This bill does not have a single earmark in it, which is unprecedented for a bill of this size—does not have a single earmark in it.

So we may debate—we can debate, you know, whether you'd rather have this tax cut versus that tax cut, or this project versus that project. Be clear, though, that there aren't a—there aren't individual pork projects that Members of Congress are putting into this bill. Regardless of what the critics say, there are no earmarks in this bill. That's part of the change that we're bringing to Washington, is making sure that this money is well spent to actually create jobs right here in Elkhart.

All right? Okay.

Gentleman up there, all the way at the top. You, that's right. [*Laughter*] But hold on a second. Let's get a mike to him. All right.

Tax Breaks/Bank Lending

Q. Thank you. I also want to just be very thrilled to be in the presence of you because we've been looking for a change. We are truly tired of the economics that we have been getting that has got us into the position that we're in. That theory has been a trickle down. We need to trickle up.

So I would hope in your philosophy of trying to kick-start the economy that the money gets directly to the people who are—have homes that are foreclosed, the people that have lost jobs. To try to give to a bank and give a low interest rate, and the person whose home has been foreclosed on don't have a job, don't help anybody. It's a sale that nobody can take advantage of because you ain't got no money.

So I would hope and I pray that you would support the people who got you into the office—we, the people, not the fat cat—[*laughter*]—we, the people—to where that the money gets directly into the hands of the people who are hurting, to where that we don't have to worry about going to the State, going to the Federal Government, standing in line somewhere. Send that check to our mailbox. [*Applause*] Amen, amen.

The President. Let me respond——

Q. So we can take it to the bank and pay that mortgage. Thank you.

The President. Let me—can everybody hear me? Hold on a second. Testing, testing. How's that? All right.

Well, let me respond in a couple of ways. Number one, when it comes to tax cuts, you are exactly right that instead of providing tax cuts to the wealthiest Americans, what I've been pushing in this plan is to make sure that the tax cuts goes to working families. That is not only good for those families, it's actually good for the economy, because when you give

a tax break to working families who are struggling, they will spend it on buying a new coat for the kids, or making sure that they get that car repaired that they use to get to work.

When you give it to the wealthier families, they just put it away somewhere, and so it doesn't circulate in the economy. So tax cuts targeted to working families are the most effective means of stimulus that we can provide to the economy.

Now, you're making another point, though, that has to do with a separate part of what we're going to need to get this economy moving again, and that has to do with the financial system and the banking system. And I just want to be clear that the Recovery and Reinvestment Act that is before Congress right now is just one leg in the stool of recovery.

The other thing that we've got to get done is we've got to get the banks stable and lending again. Part of what's happened in terms of the RV industry, for example—I was talking to Congressman Donnelly about this—is basically people who want to buy an RV can't get financing right now even if they've got good credit. So what we're going to be trying to do is to set up a whole new mechanism for helping people get consumer credit. We're going to help small businesses and medium-sized businesses get credit. And instead of just pumping that money directly into Wall Street, we're going to make sure that a lot of that money is going directly to consumers, and the money that does go into Wall Street is going to come with some strings attached.

You cannot expect taxpayers to bail out banks that have made bad decisions when they are then using that money to give themselves huge bonuses.

So one of the things that we've said is, look, we understand that the banking system is fragile right now and even though those folks made bad decisions, it could bring down the entire economy, and affects towns like Elkhart, so we're going to do something strengthen the banking system. But, you know, you are not going to be able to give out these big bonuses until you've paid taxpayers back. You can't get corporate jets. You can't go take a trip to Las Vegas or go down to the Super Bowl on the taxpayers' dime. There's got to be some accountability and some responsibility, and that's something that I intend to impose as President of the United States.

All right. Young lady right here, right here in the striped sweater.

The President's Cabinet Nominees/Government Ethics

Q. Thank you. My question is, you have—my name is Tara. You have come to our county and asked us to trust you, but those that you have appointed to your Cabinet are not trustworthy and can't handle their own budget and taxes.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. No, no, no, this is a legitimate—this is a legitimate question.

Q. So I'm one of those that thinks you need to have a beer with Sean Hannity. So tell me why, from my side, we can understand——

Audience members. Boo!

The President. No, that's okay. That's okay. No, no, look, I think it was a perfectly legitimate question.

First of all, I appoint—I've appointed hundreds of people, all of whom are outstanding Americans who are doing a great job. There are a couple who had problems before they came into my administration in terms of their taxes. Look—and I think this is a legitimate criticism that people have made, because you can't expect one set of folks to not pay their taxes when everybody else is paying theirs. So I think that's a legitimate concern.

I will tell you that the individuals at issue here, I know them personally, and I think these were honest mistakes. And I made sure they were honest mistakes beforehand. And one of the things I've discovered is, if you're not going to appoint anybody whose ever made a mistake in your life, then you're not going to have anybody taking your jobs. So—[*applause*].

But having said that, what I did acknowledge, and I said it publicly on just about every TV station, is something that you probably sometimes don't hear from politicians, which is: I made a mistake. And that, because I don't want to send the signal that they're two sets of rules.

Now, understand, though, I think something that should also be mentioned is that we've set

up an unprecedented set of ethics rules in my White House where we are not—everybody will acknowledge that we have set up the highest standard ever for lobbyists not working in the administration; people who work in my administration aren't going to be able to go out the revolving door and start working for some lobbying firm and lobbying the White House. Republicans and Democrats have acknowledged that this is a very high bar that we've set for ourselves. We have not been perfect, but we are changing the culture in Washington and it's going to take some time.

Now, with respect to Sean Hannity, I didn't know that he had invited me for a beer. [*Laughter*] But I will take that under advisement. [*Laughter*] Generally, his opinion of me does not seem to be very high—[*laughter*]—but I'm always good for a beer, so—[*laughter*].

All right. Well, let me get this side of the room and then I'll come back in. I want to make sure I'm not looking too biased on one side here. That gentleman right up there in the corner there—you, yes.

Alternative Fuel Sources/Health Care

Q. Thank you, President Obama. It's—like everybody else has said, it's an honor to be here. I'm—my name is Jason Ward and I'm a local attorney here in town, but I've seen a lot of the effects that the manufacturing industry has had here. And there's been a lot of discussion with respect to green jobs and environmental issues——

The President. Right.

Q. ——and this area has been one of the areas that's been mentioned about maybe retooling to take advantage of the green revolution. And I guess the question is, with respect to the stimulus bill, is—are there provisions in there that address green job issues, improvement of environmental issues, and those type of matters?

The President. Absolutely. It's a great question, and let me describe for you just some of the things that we have in there. Under this plan, we would double the production of alternative energy—double it from where it is right now. So that's point number one.

Point number two, there is money allocated in this plan to develop the new battery technologies that will allow not just cars but potentially RVs as well to be—to move into the next generation of plug-in hybrids that get much better gas mileage, that will wean ourselves off dependence on Middle Eastern oil, and will improve our environment and lessen the potential effects of greenhouse gases and climate change.

We also have put in money that provide for the weatherization of millions of homes across the country. Now, this is an example of where you get a multiplier effect. If you allocate money to weatherize homes, the homeowner gets the benefit of lower energy bills. You right away put people back to work, many of whom in the construction industry and in the housing industry are out of work right now; they are immediately put to work doing something. You can train young people as apprentices to start getting training at—in home construction through weatherization. And you start reducing energy costs for the Nation as a whole. So there are billions of dollars in this plan allocated for moving us towards a new energy future.

Now, I'll be honest with you, some of the critics of the plan have said that's pork. I don't understand their criticism. Their basic argument is, "Well, that's—you're trying to make policy instead of just doing short-term stimulus." Well, my whole attitude is, if we're going to spend billions of dollars to creates jobs anyway, then why wouldn't we want to create jobs in things like clean energy that create a better economic future for us over the long term? That just—that's common sense to me. That's common sense to me.

And that is especially important for the Midwest, because if you think about it, the auto industry, RV industry, transportation industry is so important to us here in the Midwest. If we don't use this crisis as an opportunity to start retooling, then we will never catch up and be able to compete effectively against Japanese automakers, Korean automakers, and we will find ourselves continuing to slide. This should be an opportunity for us to retool.

And so I am going to make this a big priority over the next few days as we're trying to

reconcile the House and the Senate bill, getting folks in Congress to understand that this is one of the best possible investments that we can make.

Let me give you another example of long-term investments that are in this plan. I've been criticized because I suggested that as part of this plan we should improve information technology in the health care system. Now, here's the reason that I want to do it. Not only will it immediately create jobs in the health care industry, as well as in information technologies—people who are programmers, people who are information systems specialists—but it will also put everybody's medical records in a computerized form that will reduce medical errors and cut down the cost of health care over the long term.

One of our biggest problems is that health care costs keep on going up even when everything else is going down. You know that in your own lives. The average family premium has doubled over the last 8 years, even though your wages and your incomes haven't doubled.

If we keep on going down that path, health care is going to gobble up everything. So what I've said is, look, if we're going to be spending money anyway creating jobs, why not create jobs getting these medical records set up in a way that drives down health care costs over the long term. Some of my critics have said that's social policy, that's not stimulus. Look, doesn't it make sense, if we're going to spend this money, to solve some big problems that have been around for decades? That's what we're trying to do. That's what's in this package, and that's why I hope Congress supports it.

All right. It's a young lady's turn. This young lady right here. Hold on one second, let's get a mike to you so everybody can hear you. We got a mike?

Housing Market

Q. I'm Jackie Whittaker from South Bend, and I work as a foreclosure intervention counselor. And there's a bill pending that's—indicates that they're trying to get the authority for judges to go in and then they'd change and help mortgages. Do you think that is something that will pass?

The President. Let me talk to you about the housing foreclosure issue, because this was raised by this gentleman as well. We have to give homeowners some help and some relief.

You've got home foreclosures that have gone up astronomically during this recession, during this downturn. It is both a cause and effect of the downturn. If we don't do anything about stabilizing the housing market, it is going to be much more difficult for us to recover.

So we are going to be unveiling a series of plans to help not only homeowners who are at the brink of foreclosure, but there are a lot of homeowners who are making their mortgage payments every day, but they've seen the value of their homes decline so badly that now their mortgage is more than the value of their home, which means that even when interest rates are low, it's very hard to refinance your home to take advantage of those low rates because a bank will say, "Well, you actually owe more than the home is worth." So we're going to be doing a lot of work on this.

Now, one potential provision that has been discussed that I'm supportive of, but is not in this package—it will be on a separate package—is the idea that right now, if you have a second home or a third home or a fourth or a fifth home—[*laughter*]—and you go bankrupt, then the judge can modify the terms of your mortgage on your second, third, fourth, fifth home. So if you're worth $100 billion, you bought all these houses, and suddenly you went bankrupt, you would still be able to protect your second, third, fourth, fifth home.

But if you are like most people, including me, and you got one house—[*applause*]—keep in mind, the house I'm in, in DC, I'm just borrowing that, that's the people's house. So I'm just—I'm a guest in Washington, in the people's house. My house is on the south side of Chicago, that I own. But if you just have one house, it turns out that under current law you can't modify that mortgage if you are in bankruptcy. And if you just can't make the payments, the judge is not authorized to modify that loan so that let's say, the banks have to take a little bit less, but you are still making some payments. Now that makes no sense. What that's doing is, it's forcing a lot of people into foreclosure who potentially

would be better off, and the bank would be better off and the community would be better off, if they're at least making some payments, but they're not able to make all the payments necessary.

So this is a piece of legislation that I strongly support. We're going to try to make that part of our housing package so that—remember I said, this recovery package and reinvestment package is just one leg of the stool. We've got to deal with the credit crisis; we've got to deal with housing. There are a whole bunch of other steps that we're going to have to take, and this is one of them.

All right. The gentleman right back here in the tie, here, yes.

Alternative Fuel Sources/Renewable Energy

Q. Thank you, President Obama. I'm Bill Keith from SunRise Solar. I manufacture a solar-powered attic fan right here in Indiana. And—[*applause*]—believe me, a lot of people encouraged me to go to China years ago to manufacture my products so I could live a little higher on the hog, and I decided to keep my friends and neighbors employed and make it right here.

The President. That's right. Excellent.

Q. And I wanted you to know that we've got people in this row—Eric, Laura, Terry, Denise, Jesse Carbonda up in the balcony, and Gary Freimiller—and these are people who are running green companies right now that are employing American people on our soil and keeping jobs here.

What we need is a little more friendly environment from the utility companies, so if I want to put a solar system on my house, I can get more than 9 cents on the dollar for the electric I feed back into it.

The President. Yes.

Q. Some legislation like that would be helpful. And what my stance has been is, if the Federal Government mandates that the utility companies have to produce at least so much renewable energy, then all of our rates are going to go up.

So I've been trying to encourage my own State to be more proactive and adopt a renewable energy standard, renewable electric standard on their own. What do you see in the pipeline for companies like mine? Because it's hard—I don't get any tax—you know, those of you out there that think that the prior administration or someone gave us some kind of benefits for being a green company here—there are none. I mean, there's no real incentive for us to do what we're doing, so we're doing it out of passion right now. So we appreciate all that you're saying about renewables.

The President. Good. Well, let me—three things that we can do, just very specific and we can do them quickly, and then there's a fourth thing that we can do that will take a little bit more time.

Number one is that we need to pass a renewable energy standard. And what that does is, just for people who aren't sort of experts in the field, it's pretty simple. What it says is—to the various utilities, it says, you need to get 15 percent or 20 percent of your energy from renewable sources. And once you set that benchmark, then what happens is, is that people who are producing renewable energy—solar or wind or hydrothermal—what they're able to do then is count on a pretty solid market that they're going to be able to sell their energy to. And that means investors, then, will say, "You know what, this is actually a pretty good thing for us to invest in." And it—over time what that means is, is that more and more people invest in renewable energy, which means that technology gets better, the research and development improves, and you start growing that sector. So a renewable energy standard is very important. That's point number one.

Point number two is we should be providing tax credits and loan guarantees to renewable energy. There are some in place currently that have—are on the verge of lapsing, and we have to act much more forcefully in terms of making sure that those are in place. That's the second thing.

The third thing that we should be doing is working with utilities all across America, including here in Indiana, to do what some utilities are already doing in California. And this is a really smart thing. What they do is, the utility is able to make money not just on how much

energy it sells, but it's also able to make money on how much energy its customers save.

So you can structure how they charge your electricity bill so that if you started installing a solar panel, that you would actually, as you point out, be able to sell some of that energy back when you're not using it. You get to put some money in your pocket, and the utilities are rewarded for encouraging you to do that. Right now they don't have enough incentive to do it because they're making money the more energy you use, whereas what we want to do is make—give them incentives so that they are constantly telling you how you can save energy.

The fourth thing, and this is the thing that's going to take a little bit longer, is we've got to improve basic science, research, and development. When it comes to solar, when it comes to wind, the price has gone down, but generally speaking, it's still a little more expensive than fossil fuels: coal, natural gas, and so forth. So we've got to improve the technology, and that's why I want to make sure that we're investing some money every year in the development of new energy technologies that will drive those costs down over the long term.

The country that figures out how to make cheaper energy that's also clean, that country is going to win the economic competition of the future. And I want that to be the United States of America. That's one of my commitments as President of the United States.

All right, this part of the room has been kind of neglected here. Let's get that young lady right there. Yes.

Job Creation/Education

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. My name is Erin Mendoza, and I kind of had a question that went along with the gentleman over there. What are you going to do about enticing companies to stay here in the United States once we have them? A lot of local companies have gone overseas since I was born—sorry. And the economy here in Elkhart was at a high, and it is going down because companies are enticed to leave. So like the gentleman said, they can live higher on the hog.

The President. Well, look, I believe that the United States has the most productive workers. We've got the best universities and colleges. We've got the most dynamic, risk-taking economy and innovative economy of any in the world. So we can compete against anybody.

But we've got some problems both in terms of our failure to invest in what's going to keep us competitive; we under-invest when it comes to energy—we just talked about. Our health care system is broken, and that's a huge cost. A lot of employers who want to stay here find it very difficult to deal with the rising cost of health care for their employees. So fixing health care will actually make us more competitive.

We've got a Tax Code that is too often skewed to encourage companies to move overseas. We still have laws on the books that give tax breaks to companies that are shipping jobs overseas. And I think it's important for us to give tax breaks to companies that are investing right here in Elkhart, and right here in the United States of America.

Now, having said all that, the single most important factor I think in whether or not companies are going to continue to locate here in Elkhart and around the country is, what are we doing about education. Because the quality of the work force is probably what most companies are going to pay the most attention to over time. There are going to be some companies that just ship jobs overseas, because it's low value-added work. And they don't need skilled labor. And if you don't need skilled labor to make certain things, then you're just going to find the cheapest place. And we're never going to be able to compete against a country like Bangladesh when it comes to low-wage work.

But what we should be looking for is how do we encourage high-wage, high-value work. And there the key is going to be how well we are training our work force. That's why in this recovery and reinvestment package, we put billions of dollars not only to make sure that school districts who are getting hammered are able to keep their teachers, but also we have money in the package to make sure that we are retraining our teachers around math and science, so that they are able to provide our young people what they need to compete in this new global economy. We have money to make—create new labs, so that we have got science labs and the latest

Internet connections into our schools so that they are part of this modern economy; we have money to revamp our community colleges, which are a tremendous bridge for people who maybe need more training to get these new jobs of the future.

Now, I'll be honest with you, the Senate version cut a lot of these education dollars. I would like to see some of it restored. And over the next few days, as we are having these conversations, we should talk about how we can make sure that we're investing in education, because that's what's going to keep companies investing right here in the United States over the long term. All right?

Now, there's a young man right in front of you here who's—yes, you. [*Laughter*] In fact, I just received a note that this is the last question.

Audience members. Aww!

The President. Oh, don't be mad at me. [*Laughter*] I would love to stay here for a long time, but I've got to go back to Washington and convince everybody to get moving on this package.

Education

The President. And this is a good place to end, with our future here. What's your name?

Q. My name is James.

The President. James, how old are you?

Q. I'm 9 years old.

The President. Okay, fantastic. What's your question?

Q. What are you going to do to help our schools?

The President. Well, you know, I just started talking about that. [*Laughter*] So, James, as I said, I think that we've got to rebuild our schools to make sure that they're state of the art. We also have to make sure that we are training new teachers and retraining some of the existing teachers so that they've got the best possible skills.

We also are going to have to reform how we do business in some of the schools. I think it's very important for us to have high standards. I think we've got to do a better job, though, of assessing performance in schools. No Child Left Behind needs to be reworked in a more effective way.

But the last thing that we need in schools—do in schools has nothing to do with money. It has everything to do with parents. Because we can put as much money as we want into schools—if parents don't have an attitude that says, I'm going to make sure my child does my homework; that I'm meeting with the teacher to find out what's going on; if all of us aren't instilling a sense of excellence in our kids, then they're not going to be able to compete. And that means young people like you, you're going to have to work a little harder. [*Laughter*]

Yes. Thank you, James.

All right, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:09 p.m. at Concord Community High School. In his remarks, he referred to Ed Neufeldt, former employee, Monaco Coach Corporation, who introduced the President; George Dyer, superintendent, Concord Community Schools; and Sean Hannity, host of FOX News Channel's "Hannity" program.

The President's News Conference
February 9, 2009

The President. Good evening, everybody. Please be seated.

Before I take your questions tonight, I'd like to speak briefly about the state of our economy and why I believe we need to put this recovery plan in motion as soon as possible.

I took a trip to Elkhart, Indiana today. Elkhart is a place that has lost jobs faster than anywhere else in America. In 1 year, the unemployment rate went from 4.7 percent to 15.3 percent. Companies that have sustained this community for years are shedding jobs at

an alarming speed, and the people who've lost them have no idea what to do or who to turn to. They can't pay their bills, and they've stopped spending money. And because they've stopped spending money, more businesses have been forced to lay off more workers. In fact, local TV stations have started running public service announcements that tell people where to find food banks, even as the food banks don't have enough to meet the demand.

As we speak, similar scenes are playing out in cities and towns across America. Last Monday, more than a thousand men and women stood in line for 35 firefighter jobs in Miami. Last month, our economy lost 598,000 jobs, which is nearly the equivalent of losing every single job in the State of Maine. And if there's anyone out there who still doesn't believe this constitutes a full-blown crisis, I suggest speaking to one of the millions of Americans whose lives have been turned upside down because they don't know where their next paycheck is coming from.

And that is why the single most important part of this economic recovery and reinvestment plan is the fact that it will save or create up to 4 million jobs, because that's what America needs most right now.

It is absolutely true that we can't depend on Government alone to create jobs or economic growth. That is and must be the role of the private sector. But at this particular moment, with the private sector so weakened by this recession, the Federal Government is the only entity left with the resources to jolt our economy back into life. It is only Government that can break the vicious cycle where lost jobs lead to people spending less money, which leads to even more layoffs. And breaking that cycle is exactly what the plan that's moving through Congress is designed to do.

When passed, this plan will ensure that Americans who've lost their jobs, through no fault of their own, can receive greater unemployment benefits and continue their health care coverage. We'll also provide a $2,500 tax credit to folks who are struggling to pay the costs of their college tuition, and $1,000 worth of badly needed tax relief to working and middle class families. These steps will put more money in the pockets of those Americans who are most likely to spend it, and that will help break the cycle and get our economy moving.

But as we've learned very clearly and conclusively over the last 8 years, tax cuts alone can't solve all of our economic problems, especially tax cuts that are targeted to the wealthiest few Americans. We have tried that strategy time and time again, and it's only helped lead us to the crisis we face right now.

And that's why we have come together around a plan that combines hundreds of billions in tax cuts for the middle class with direct investment in areas like health care, energy, education, and infrastructure, investments that will save jobs, create new jobs and new businesses, and help our economy grow again, now and in the future.

More than 90 percent of the jobs created by this plan will be in the private sector. They're not going to be make-work jobs, but jobs doing the work that America desperately needs done: jobs rebuilding our crumbling roads and bridges, repairing our dangerously deficient dams and levees so that we don't face another Katrina. They'll be jobs building the wind turbines and solar panels and fuel-efficient cars that will lower our dependence on foreign oil, and modernizing our costly health care system that will save us billions of dollars and countless lives.

They'll be jobs creating the 21st century classrooms, libraries, and labs for millions of children across America. And they'll be the jobs of firefighters and teachers and police officers that would otherwise be eliminated if we do not provide States with some relief.

After many weeks of debate and discussion, the plan that ultimately emerges from Congress must be big enough and bold enough to meet the size of the economic challenges that we face right now. It's a plan that is already supported by businesses representing almost every industry in America; by both the Chamber of Commerce and the AFL–CIO. It contains input, ideas, and compromises from both Democrats and Republicans. It also contains an unprecedented level of transparency and accountability, so that every American will be able to go online and see where and how we're spending every dime. What it does not contain, however, is a

single pet project, not a single earmark, and it has been stripped of the projects members of both parties found most objectionable.

Now, despite all of this, the plan is not perfect; no plan is. I can't tell you for sure that everything in this plan will work exactly as we hope, but I can tell you with complete confidence that a failure to act will only deepen this crisis as well as the pain felt by millions of Americans. Now, my administration inherited a deficit of over $1 trillion, but because we also inherited the most profound economic emergency since the Great Depression, doing a little or nothing at all will result in even greater deficits, even greater job loss, even greater loss of income, and even greater loss of confidence. Those are deficits that could turn a crisis into a catastrophe. And I refuse to let that happen. As long as I hold this office, I will do whatever it takes to put this economy back on track and put this country back to work.

I want to thank the Members of Congress who've worked so hard to move this plan forward. But I also want to urge all Members of Congress to act without delay in the coming week to resolve their differences and pass this plan.

We find ourselves in a rare moment where the citizens of our country and all countries are watching and waiting for us to lead. It's a responsibility that this generation did not ask for, but one that we must accept for the future and our children and our grandchildren. And the strongest democracies flourish from frequent and lively debate, but they endure when people of every background and belief find a way to set aside smaller differences in service of a greater purpose.

That's the test facing the United States of America in this winter of our hardship. And it is our duty as leaders and citizens to say—stay true to that purpose in the weeks and months ahead. After a day of speaking with and listening to the fundamentally decent men and women who call this Nation home, I have full faith and confidence that we can do it. But we're going to have to work together. And that's what I intend to promote in the weeks and days ahead.

And with that, I'll take some of your questions. And let me go to Jennifer Loven at AP [Associated Press].

National Economy/Economic Stabilization Legislation

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Earlier today in Indiana, you said something striking. You said that this Nation could end up in a crisis without action that we would be unable to reverse. Can you talk about what you know or what you're hearing that would lead you to say that our recession might be permanent, when others in our history have not? And do you think that you risk losing some credibility or even talking down the economy by using dire language like that?

The President. No, no, no, no. I think that what I've said is what other economists have said across the political spectrum, which is that if you delay acting on an economy of this severity, then you potentially create a negative spiral that becomes much more difficult for us to get out of. We saw this happen in Japan in the 1990s, where they did not act boldly and swiftly enough, and as a consequence they suffered what was called the "lost decade" where essentially for the entire nineties they did not see any significant economic growth.

So what I'm trying to underscore is what the people in Elkhart already understand: that this is not your ordinary run-of-the-mill recession. We are going through the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. We've lost now 3.6 million jobs, but what's perhaps even more disturbing is that almost half of that job loss has taken place over the last 3 months, which means that the problems are accelerating instead of getting better.

Now, what I said in Elkhart today is what I repeat this evening, which is, I'm absolutely confident that we can solve this problem, but it's going to require us to take some significant, important steps.

Step number one: We have to pass an economic recovery and reinvestment plan. And we've made progress. There was a vote this evening that moved the process forward in the Senate. We already have a House bill that's passed. I'm hoping over the next several days

that the House and the Senate can reconcile their differences and get that bill on my desk.

There have been criticisms from a bunch of different directions about this bill, so let me just address a few of them. Some of the criticisms really are with the basic idea that Government should intervene at all in this moment of crisis. Now, you have some people, very sincere, who philosophically just think the Government has no business interfering in the marketplace. And in fact, there are several who've suggested that FDR was wrong to intervene back in the New Deal. They're fighting battles that I thought were resolved a pretty long time ago.

Most economists, almost unanimously, recognize that even if philosophically you're wary of Government intervening in the economy, when you have the kind of problem we have right now: what started on Wall Street goes to Main Street, suddenly businesses can't get credit, they start paring back their investment, they start laying off workers, workers start pulling back in terms of spending that—when you have that situation, that Government is an important element of introducing some additional demand into the economy. We stand to lose about $1 trillion worth of demand this year and another trillion next year. And what that means is you've got this gaping hole in the economy.

That's why the figure that we initially came up with of approximately $800 billion was put forward. That wasn't just some random number that I plucked out of a hat. That was Republican and Democratic, conservative and liberal economists that I spoke to, who indicated that given the magnitude of the crisis and the fact that it's happening worldwide, it's important for us to have a bill of sufficient size and scope that we can save or create 4 million jobs. That still means that you're going to have some net job loss, but at least we can start slowing the trend and moving it in the right direction.

Now, the recovery and reinvestment package is not the only thing we have to do, it's one leg of the stool. We are still going to have to make sure that we are attracting private capital, get the credit markets flowing again, because that's the lifeblood of the economy.

And so tomorrow my Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner will be announcing some very clear and specific plans for how we are going to start loosening up credit once again. And that means having some transparency and oversight in the system. It means that we correct some of the mistakes with TARP that were made earlier, the lack of consistency, the lack of clarity in terms of how the program was going to move forward. It means that we condition taxpayer dollars that are being provided to banks on them showing some restraint when it comes to executive compensation, not using the money to charter corporate jets when they're not necessary. It means that we focus on housing and how are we going to help homeowners that are suffering foreclosure or homeowners who are still making their mortgage payments, but are seeing their property values decline.

So there are going to be a whole range of approaches that we have to take for dealing with the economy. My bottom line is to make sure that we are saving or creating 4 million jobs, we are making sure that the financial system is working again, that homeowners are getting some relief. And I'm happy to get good ideas from across the political spectrum, from Democrats and Republicans. What I won't do is return to the failed theories of the last 8 years that got us into this fix in the first place, because those theories have been tested, and they have failed. And that's part of what the election in November was all about.

Okay, Caren Bohan of Reuters.

Iran

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I'd like to shift gears to foreign policy. What is your strategy for engaging Iran, and when will you start to implement it? Will your timetable be affected at all by the Iranian elections? And are you getting any indications that Iran is interested in a dialog with the United States?

The President. I said during the campaign that Iran is a country that has extraordinary people, extraordinary history and traditions, but that its actions over many years now have been unhelpful when it comes to promoting peace and prosperity both in the region and around the world; that their attacks or their financing of terrorist organizations like Hizballah and Hamas, the bellicose language that they've used

towards Israel, their development of a nuclear weapon, or their pursuit of a nuclear weapon, that all those things create the possibility of destabilizing the region and are not only contrary to our interests, but I think are contrary to the interests of international peace. What I've also said is that we should take an approach with Iran that employs all of the resources at the United States disposal, and that includes diplomacy.

And so my national security team is currently reviewing our existing Iran policy, looking at areas where we can have constructive dialog, where we can directly engage with them. And my expectation is in the coming months we will be looking for openings that can be created where we can start sitting across the table, face to face, diplomatic overtures that will allow us to move our policy in a new direction.

There's been a lot of mistrust built up over the years, so it's not going to happen overnight. And it's important that even as we engage in this direct diplomacy, we are very clear about certain deep concerns that we have as a country: that Iran understands that we find the funding of terrorist organizations unacceptable; that we're clear about the fact that a nuclear Iran could set off a nuclear arms race in the region that would be profoundly destabilizing.

So there are going to be a set of objectives that we have in these conversations, but I think that there's the possibility at least of a relationship of mutual respect and progress. And I think that if you look at how we've approached the Middle East, my designation of George Mitchell as a special envoy to help deal with the Arab-Israeli situation, some of the interviews that I've given, it indicates the degree to which we want to do things differently in the region. Now it's time for Iran to send some signals that it wants to act differently as well, and recognize that even as it has some rights as a member of the international community, with those rights come responsibilities.

Okay. Chip Reid [CBS News].

Bipartisanship in Congress/Economic Stabilization Legislation

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You have often said that bipartisanship is extraordinarily important overall, and in this stimulus package. But now when we ask your advisers about the lack of bipartisanship so far—zero votes in the House, three in the Senate—they say, "Well, it's not the number of votes that matters, it's the number of jobs that will be created." Is that a sign that you are moving away—your White House is moving away from this emphasis on bipartisanship? And what went wrong? Did you underestimate how hard it would be to change the way Washington works?

The President. Oh, I don't think I underestimated it. I don't think the under—the American people underestimated it. They understand that there have been a lot of bad habits built up here in Washington, and it's going to take time to break down some of those bad habits.

You know, when I made a series of overtures to the Republicans—going over to meet with both Republican caucuses, you know, putting three Republicans in my Cabinet, something that is unprecedented, making sure that they were invited here to the White House to talk about the economic recovery plan—all those were not designed simply to get some short-term votes. They were designed to try to build up some trust over time. And I think that as I continue to make these overtures, over time hopefully that will be reciprocated.

But understand the bottom line that I've got right now, which is what's happening to the people of Elkhart and what's happening across the country. I can't afford to see Congress play the usual political games. What we have to do right now is deliver for the American people. So my bottom line when it comes to the recovery package is, send me a bill that creates or saves 4 million jobs. Because everybody has to be possessed with a sense of urgency about putting people back to work, making sure that folks are staying in their homes, that they can send their kids to college.

That doesn't negate the continuing efforts that I'm going to make to listen and engage with my Republican colleagues, and hopefully the tone that I've taken, which has been consistently civil and respectful, will pay some dividends over the long term. There are going to be areas where we disagree, and there are going to be areas where we agree.

As I said, the one concern I've got on the stimulus package, in terms of the debate and listening to some of what's been said in Congress, is that there seems to be a set of folks who—I don't doubt their sincerity—who just believe that we should do nothing. Now, if that's their opening position or their closing position in negotiations, then we're probably not going to make much progress, because I don't think that's economically sound, and I don't think what—that's what the American people expect, is for us to stand by and do nothing.

There are others who recognize that we've got to do a significant recovery package, but they're concerned about the mix of what's in there. And if they're sincere about it, then I'm happy to have conversations about this tax cut versus that tax cut, or this infrastructure project versus that infrastructure project. But what I—what I've been concerned about is some of the language that's been used suggesting that this is full of pork and this is wasteful government spending, so on and so forth.

First of all, when I hear that from folks who presided over a doubling of the national debt, then I just want them to not engage in some revisionist history. I inherited the deficit that we have right now, and the economic crisis that we have right now.

Number two is that although there are some programs in there that I think are good policy, some of them aren't job creators. I think it's perfectly legitimate to say that those programs should be out of this particular recovery package, and we can deal with them later. But when they start characterizing this as pork without acknowledging that there are no earmarks in this package—something again that was pretty rare over the last 8 years—then you get a feeling that maybe we're playing politics instead of actually trying to solve problems for the American people.

So I'm going to keep on engaging. I hope that as we get the Senate and the House bills together, that everybody is willing to give a little bit. I suspect that the package that emerges is not going to be a hundred percent of what I want. But my bottom line is, are we creating 4 million jobs, and are we laying the foundation for long-term economic growth. This is another concern that I've had in some of the arguments that I'm hearing.

When people suggest that, what a waste of money to make Federal buildings more energy efficient, why would that be a waste of money? We're creating jobs immediately by retrofitting these buildings, or weatherizing 2 million Americans' homes, as was called for in the package. So that right there creates economic stimulus. And we are saving taxpayers when it comes to Federal buildings potentially $2 billion. In the case of homeowners, they will see more money in their pockets, and we're reducing our dependence on foreign oil in the Middle East. Why wouldn't we want to make that kind of investment?

Now, maybe philosophically you just don't think that the Federal Government should be involved in energy policy. I happen to disagree with that. I think that's the reason why we find ourselves importing more foreign oil now than we did back in the early seventies when OPEC first formed. And we can have a respectful debate about whether or not we should be involved in energy policymaking, but don't suggest that somehow that's wasteful spending. That's exactly what this country needs.

The same applies when it comes to information technologies in health care. We know that health care is crippling businesses and making us less competitive as well as breaking the banks of families all across America, and part of the reason is we've got the most inefficient health care system imaginable. We're still using paper; we're still filing things in triplicate. Nurses can't read the prescriptions that doctors have written out. Why wouldn't we want to put that on an electronic medical record that will reduce error rates, reduce our long-term cost of health care, and create jobs right now?

Education, yet another example. The suggestion is why should the Federal Government be

involved in school construction. Well, I visited a school down in South Carolina that was built in the 1850s. Kids are still learning in that school, as best they can. When the railroad—it's right next to a railroad, and when the train runs by, the whole building shakes and the teacher has to stop teaching for a while. The auditorium is completely broken down; they can't use it. So why wouldn't we want to build state-of-the-art schools with science labs that are teaching our kids the skills they need for the 21st century, that will enhance our economy, and by the way, right now will create jobs?

So we can differ on some of the particulars, but again, the question I think the American people are asking is, do you just want government to do nothing, or do you want it to do something? If you want it to do something, then we can have a conversation. But doing nothing, that's not an option from my perspective.

All right. Chuck Todd [NBC News]. Where's Chuck?

National Economy

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. In your opening remarks, you talked about that if your plan works the way you want it to work, it's going to increase consumer spending. But isn't consumer spending or overspending how we got into this mess? And if people get money back into their pockets, do you not want them saving it or paying down debt first before they start spending money into the economy?

The President. Well, first of all, I don't think it's accurate to say that consumer spending got us into this mess. What got us into this mess initially were banks taking exorbitant, wild risks with other people's monies based on shaky assets. And because of the enormous leverage where they had $1 worth of assets and they were betting $30 on that $1, what we had was a crisis in the financial system. That led to a contraction of credit, which in turn meant businesses couldn't make payroll or make inventories, which meant that everybody became uncertain about the future of the economy, so people started making decisions accordingly, reducing investment, initiated layoffs, which in turn made things worse.

Now, you are making a legitimate point, Chuck, about the fact that our savings rate has declined and this economy has been driven by consumer spending for a very long time, and that's not going to be sustainable. You know, if all we're doing is spending, and we're not making things, then over time other countries are going to get tired of lending us money and eventually the party is going to be over. Well, in fact, the party now is over.

And so the sequence of how we're approaching this is as follows: Our immediate job is to stop the downward spiral, and that means putting money into consumers' pockets, it means loosening up credit, it means putting forward investments that not only employ people immediately but also lay the groundwork for long-term economic growth. And that, by the way, is important even if you're a fiscal conservative, because the biggest problem we're going to have with our Federal budget is if we continue a situation in which there are no tax revenues because economic growth is plummeting at the same time as we've got more demands for unemployment insurance, we've got more demands for people who've lost their health care, more demand for food stamps. That will put enormous strains on the Federal budget as well as the State budget.

So the most important thing we can do for our budget crisis right now is to make sure that the economy doesn't continue to tank. And that's why passing the economic recovery plan is the right thing to do, even though I recognize that it's expensive. Look, I would love not to have to spend money right now. I'd—this notion that somehow I came in here just ginned up to spend $800 billion, that wasn't how I envisioned my Presidency beginning, but we have to adapt to existing circumstances.

Now, what we are going to also have to do is to make sure that as soon as the economy stabilizes, investment begins again; we're no longer contracting but we're growing; that our mid-term and long-term budget is dealt with. And I think the same is true for individual consumers. Right now they're just trying to figure out, how do I make sure that if I lose my job,

I'm still going to be able to make my mortgage payments. Or they're worried about how am I going to pay next month's bills. So they're not engaging in a lot of long-term financial planning.

Once the economy stabilizes and people are less fearful, then I do think that we're going to have to start thinking about how do we operate more prudently, because there's no such thing as a free lunch. So if you want to get—if you want to buy a house, then putting zero down and buying a house that is probably not affordable for you in case something goes wrong, that's something that has to be reconsidered.

So we're going to have to change our bad habits. But right now, the key is making sure that we pull ourselves out of the economic slump that we're in.

All right. Julianna Goldman, Bloomberg.

Bank Lending

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Many experts, from Nouriel Roubini to Senator Schumer, have said that it will cost the Government more than a trillion dollars to really fix the financial system. During the campaign, you promised the American people that you won't just tell them what they want to hear, but what they need to hear. Won't the Government need far more than the $350 billion that's remaining in the financial rescue funds to really solve the credit crisis?

The President. Well, the credit crisis is real and it's not over. We averted catastrophe by passing the TARP legislation. But as I said before, because of a lack of clarity and consistency in how it was applied, a lack of oversight in how the money went out, we didn't get as big of a bang for the buck as we should have.

My immediate task is making sure that the second half of that money, $350 billion, is spent properly. That's my first job. Before I even think about what else I've got to do, my first task is to make sure that my Secretary of the Treasury, Tim Geithner, working with Larry Summers, my National Economic Adviser, and others, are coming up with the best possible plan to use this money wisely—in a way that's transparent; in a way that provides clear oversight; that we are conditioning any money that we give to banks on them reducing executive compensation to reasonable levels; and to make sure that they're not wasting that money.

We are going to have to work with the banks in an effective way to clean up their balance sheets so that some trust is restored within the marketplace, because right now part of the problem is that nobody really knows what's on the banks' books. Any given bank, they're not sure what kinds of losses are there. We've got to open things up and restore some trust.

We also have to deal with the housing issue in a clear and consistent way. I don't want to preempt my Secretary of the Treasury; he's going to be laying out these principles in great detail tomorrow. But my instruction to him has been, let's get this right, let's create a template in which we're restoring market confidence. And the reason that's so important is because we don't know yet whether we're going to need additional money or how much additional money we'll need until we've seen how successful we are at restoring a sense of confidence in the marketplace, that the Federal Government and the Federal Reserve Bank and the FDIC, working in concert, know what they're doing. That can make a big difference in terms of whether or not we attract private capital back into the marketplace.

And ultimately, the Government cannot substitute for all the private capital that has been withdrawn from the system. We've got to restore confidence so that private capital goes back in.

Okay. Jake [Jake Tapper, ABC News].

Economic Stabilization Legislation

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. My question follows Julianna's in content. The American people have seen hundreds of billions of dollars spent already, and still the economy continues to free fall. Beyond avoiding the national catastrophe that you've warned about, once all the legs of your stool are in place, how can the American people gauge whether or not your programs are working? Can they—should they be looking at the metric of the stock market, home foreclosures, unemployment? What metric should they use? When? And how will they

know if it's working, or whether or not we need to go to a plan B?

The President. I think my initial measure of success is creating or saving 4 million jobs. That's bottom line number one, because if people are working, then they've got enough confidence to make purchases, to make investments. Businesses start seeing that consumers are out there with a little more confidence, and they start making investments, which means they start hiring workers. So step number one: job creation.

Step number two: Are we seeing the credit markets operate effectively? I can't tell you how many businesses that I talk to that are successful businesses, but just can't get credit. Part of the problem in Elkhart, that I heard about today, was the fact that—this is the RV capital of America. You've got a bunch of RV companies that have customers who want to purchase RVs, but even though their credit is good, they can't get the loan. Now, the businesses also can't get loans to make payments to their suppliers. But when they have consumers, consumers can't get the loans that they need. So normalizing the credit markets is, I think, step number two.

Step number three is going to be housing: Have we stabilized the housing market? Now, the Federal Government doesn't have complete control over that, but if our plan is effective, working with the Federal Reserve Bank, working with the FDIC, I think what we can do is stem the rate of foreclosure, and we can start stabilizing housing values over time. And the most—the biggest measure of success is whether we stop contracting and shedding jobs, and we start growing again. Now, I don't have a crystal ball, and as I've said, this is an unprecedented crisis. But my hope is that after a difficult year—and this year is going to be a difficult year—that businesses start investing again, they start making decisions that, you know, in fact, there's money to be made out there, customers or consumers start feeling that their jobs are stable and safe, and they start making purchases again. And if we get things right, then starting next year we can start seeing some significant improvement.

Ed Henry. Where's Ed, CNN [Cable News Network]? There he is.

Military Policy on Media Access to Dover Air Force Base/Military Operations in Afghanistan

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You promised to send more troops to Afghanistan. And since you've been very clear about a timetable to withdraw all combat troops from Iraq within 16 months, I wonder, what's your timetable to withdraw troops eventually from Afghanistan?

And related to that, there's a Pentagon policy that bans media coverage of the flag-draped coffins from coming in to Dover Air Force Base. And back in 2004, then-Senator Joe Biden said that it was shameful for dead soldiers to be, quote, "snuck back into the country under the cover of night." You've promised unprecedented transparency, openness in your Government. Will you overturn that policy so the American people can see the full human cost of war?

The President. Your question is timely. We got reports that four American servicemembers have been killed in Iraq today, and obviously, our thoughts and prayers go out to the families. I've said before that—you know, people have asked me, "When did it hit you that you are now President?" And what I told them was the most sobering moment is signing letters to the families of our fallen heroes. It reminds you of the responsibilities that you carry in this office and the consequences of decisions that you make.

Now, with respect to the policy of opening up media to loved ones being brought back home, we are in the process of reviewing those policies in conversations with the Department of Defense, so I don't want to give you an answer now before I've evaluated that review and understand all the implications involved.

With respect to Afghanistan, this is going to be a big challenge. I think because of the extraordinary work done by our troops, and some very good diplomatic work done by Ambassador Crocker in Iraq, we just saw an election in Iraq that went relatively peacefully. And you get a sense that the political system is now functioning in a meaningful way.

You do not see that yet in Afghanistan. They've got elections coming up, but effectively the national Government seems very detached from what's going on in the surrounding community.

In addition, you've got the Taliban and Al Qaida operating in the FATA and these border regions between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and what we haven't seen is the kind of concerted effort to root out those safe havens that would ultimately make our mission successful.

So we are undergoing a thorough-going review. Not only is General Petraeus now the head of CENTCOM conducting his own review, he's now working in concert with the special envoy that I've sent over, Richard Holbrooke, one of our top diplomats, to evaluate a regional approach. We are going to need more effective coordination of our military efforts with diplomatic efforts, with development efforts, with more effective coordination, with our allies in order for us to be successful.

The bottom line, though—and I just want to remember the American people, because this is going to be difficult—is this is a situation in which a region served as the base to launch an attack that killed 3,000 Americans. And this past week, I met with families of those who were lost in 9/11, a reminder of the costs of allowing those safe havens to exist. My bottom line is that we cannot allow Al Qaida to operate. We cannot have those safe havens in that region. And we're going to have to work both smartly and effectively, but with consistency, in order to make sure that those safe havens don't exist. I do not have yet a timetable for how long that's going to take. What I know is, I'm not going to make—I'm not going to allow Al Qaida or bin Laden to operate with impunity, planning attacks on the U.S. homeland.

All right. Helene Cooper [New York Times]. Where's Helene? There you are.

Bank Lending

Q. Thank you, sir. I wanted to ask you on the next bank bailout. Are you going to impose a requirement that the financial institutions use this money to loosen up credit and make new lending? And if not, how do you make the case to the American people that this bailout will work, when the last one didn't?

The President. Again, Helene—and I'm trying to avoid preempting my Secretary of the Treasury, I want all of you to show up at his press conference as well; he's going to be terrific. But—this relates to Jake's earlier question—one of my bottom lines is whether or not credit is flowing to the people who need it. Is it flowing to banks—excuse me, is it flowing to businesses, large and small? Is it flowing to consumers? Are they able to operate in ways that translate into jobs and economic growth on Main Street? And the package that we've put together is designed to help do that.

And beyond that, I'm going to make sure that Tim gets his moment in the sun tomorrow.

All right. Major Garrett [FOX News]. Where's Major?

Vice President Joe Biden/National Economy

Q. Mr. President, at a speech Friday that many of us covered, Vice President Biden said the following thing about a conversation the two of you had in the Oval Office, about a subject he didn't disclose: "If we do everything right, if we do it with absolute certainty, if we stand up there and we really make the tough decisions, there's still a 30 percent chance we're going to get it wrong." Since the Vice President brought it up, can you tell the American people, sir, what you were talking about? And if not, can you at least reassure them it wasn't the stimulus bill or the bank rescue plan—[*laughter*]—and if in general, you agree with that ratio of success, 30 percent failure, 70 percent success?

The President. You know, I don't remember exactly what Joe was referring to. [*Laughter*] Not surprisingly. But let me try this out. I think what Joe may have been suggesting, although I wouldn't put numerical—I wouldn't ascribe any numerical percentage to any of this—is that given the magnitude of the challenges that we have, any single thing that we do is going to be part of the solution, not all of the solution. And as I said in my introductory remarks, not everything we do is going to work out exactly as we intended it to work out.

This is an unprecedented problem. And when you talk to economists, there is some

general sense of how we're going to move forward; there's some strong consensus about the need for a recovery package of a certain magnitude; there's a strong consensus that you shouldn't put all your eggs in one basket, all tax cuts or all investment, but that there should be a range of approaches.

But even if we do everything right on that, we've still got to deal with what we just talked about, the financial system, and making sure that banks are lending again. We're still going to have to deal with housing. We're still going to have to make sure that we've got a regulatory structure—a regulatory architecture for the financial system that prevents crises like this from occurring again. Those are all big, complicated tasks. So I don't know whether Joe was referring to that, but I use that as a launching point to make a general point about these issues.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. I have no idea, I really don't. Michael Fletcher, the Washington Post.

Performance Enhancing Drugs in Sports

Q. Yes, thank you, sir. What is your reaction to Alex Rodriguez's admission that he used steroids as a member of the Texas Rangers?

The President. I think it's depressing news on top of what's been a flurry of depressing items when it comes to Major League Baseball. And if you're a fan of Major League Baseball, I think it tarnishes an entire era to some degree. And it's unfortunate, because I think there are a lot of ballplayers who played it straight. And the thing I'm probably most concerned about is the message that it sends to our kids.

What I'm pleased about is Major League Baseball seems to finally be taking this seriously, to recognize how big of a problem this is for the sport. And that our kids, hopefully, are watching and saying, you know what, there are no shortcuts; that when you try to take shortcuts, you may end up tarnishing your entire career, and that your integrity is not worth it. That's the message I hope is communicated.

All right, Helen [Helen Thomas, Hearst Newspapers]. This is my inaugural moment here. [*Laughter*] I'm really excited.

Pakistan/Weapons of Mass Destruction

Q. Mr. President, do you think that Pakistan are maintaining the safe havens in Afghanistan for these so-called terrorists? And also, do you know of any country in the Middle East that has nuclear weapons?

The President. Well, I think that Pakistan—there is no doubt that in the FATA region of Pakistan, in the mountainous regions along the border of Afghanistan, that there are safe havens where terrorists are operating. And one of the goals of Ambassador Holbrooke, as he is traveling throughout the region, is to deliver a message to Pakistan that they are endangered as much as we are by the continuation of those operations. And that we've got to work in a regional fashion to root out those safe havens. It's not acceptable for Pakistan or for us to have folks who, with impunity, will kill innocent men, women, and children. And I believe that the new Government of Pakistan and Mr. Zardari cares deeply about getting control of this situation. And we want to be effective partners with them on that issue.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. Well, Mr. Holbrooke is there, and that's exactly why he is being sent there, because I think that we have to make sure that Pakistan is a stalwart ally with us in battling this terrorist threat.

With respect to nuclear weapons, you know, I don't want to speculate. What I know is this: that if we see a nuclear arms race in a region as volatile as the Middle East, everybody will be in danger. And one of my goals is to prevent nuclear proliferation generally. I think that it's important for the United States, in concert with Russia, to lead the way on this. And, you know, I've mentioned this in conversations with the Russian President, Mr. Medvedev, to let him know that it is important for us to restart the conversations about how we can start reducing our nuclear arsenals in an effective way so that we then have the standing to go to other countries and start stitching back together the nonproliferation treaties that, frankly, have been weakened over the last several years.

Q. Why do we have to pick——

The President. Okay, all right.

Q. ——on who—[*inaudible*]?

The President. Sam Stein, Huffington Post—where's Sam? Here.

Bush Administration/U.S. Foreign Policy

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Today Senator Patrick Leahy announced that he wants to set up a truth and reconciliation committee to investigate the misdeeds of the Bush administration. He said that before you turn the page, you have to read the page first. Do you agree with such a proposal, and are you willing to rule out right here and now any prosecution of Bush administration officials?

The President. I haven't seen the proposal, so I don't want to express an opinion on something that I haven't seen.

What I have said is that my administration is going to operate in a way that leaves no doubt that we do not torture, and that we abide by the Geneva Conventions, and that we observe our traditions of rule of law and due process, as we are vigorously going after terrorists that can do us harm. And I don't think those are contradictory; I think they are potentially complementary.

My view is also that nobody is above the law, and if there are clear instances of wrongdoing, that people should be prosecuted just like any ordinary citizen; but that generally speaking, I'm more interested in looking forward than I am in looking backwards. I want to pull everybody together, including, by the way, the—all the members of the intelligence community who have done things the right way and have been working hard to protect America, and I think sometimes are painted with a broad brush without adequate information.

So I will take a look at Senator Leahy's proposal, but my general orientation is to say, let's get it right moving forward.

Mara Liasson [National Public Radio].

Bipartisanship in Congress/Economic Stabilization Legislation

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. If it's this hard to get more than a handful of Republican votes on what is relatively easy—spending tons of money and cutting people's taxes—when you look down the road at health care and entitlement reform and energy reform, those are really tough choices. You're going to be asking some people to get less and some people to pay more.

What do you think you're going to have to do to get more bipartisanship? Are you going to need a new legislative model, bringing in Republicans from the very beginning, getting more involved in the details yourself from the beginning, or using bipartisan commissions? What has this experience with the stimulus led you to think about when you think about these future challenges?

The President. Well, as I said before, Mara, I think that old habits are hard to break. And we're coming off an election, and I think people want to sort of test the limits of what they can get. There's a lot of jockeying in this town and a lot of who's up and who's down and positioning for the next election.

And what I've tried to suggest is that this is one of those times where we've got to put that kind of behavior aside, because the American people can't afford it. The people in Elkhart can't afford it. The single mom who's trying to figure out how to keep her house can't afford it. And whether we're Democrats or Republicans, surely there's got to be some capacity for us to work together, not agree on everything, but at least set aside small differences to get things done.

Now, just in terms of the historic record here, the Republicans were brought in early and were consulted. And you'll remember that when we initially introduced our framework, they were pleasantly surprised and complimentary about the tax cuts that were presented in that framework. Those tax cuts are still in there. I mean, I suppose what I could have done is started off with no tax cuts, knowing that I was going to want some, and then let them take credit for all of them. And maybe that's the lesson I learned.

But there was consultation. There will continue to be consultation. One thing that I think is important is to recognize that because all these items that you listed are hard, that people

have to break out of some of the ideological rigidity and gridlock that we've been carrying around for too long.

And let me give you a prime example: when it comes to how we approach the issue of fiscal responsibility. Again, it's a little hard for me to take criticism from folks about this recovery package after they presided over a doubling of the national debt. I'm not sure they have a lot of credibility when it comes to fiscal responsibility.

Having said that, I think there are a lot of Republicans who are sincere in recognizing that unless we deal with entitlements in a serious way, the problems we have with this year's deficit and next year's deficit pale in comparison to what we're going to be seeing 10 or 15 years or 20 years down the road.

Both Democrats and Republicans are going to have to think differently in order to come together and solve that problem. I think there are areas like education where some in my party have been too resistant to reform, and have argued only money makes a difference. And there have been others on the Republican side or the conservative side who said no matter how much money you spend, nothing makes a difference, so let's just blow up the public school systems.

And I think that both sides are going to have to acknowledge we're going to need more money for new science labs, to pay teachers more effectively, but we're also going to need more reform, which means that we've got to train teachers more effectively, bad teachers need to be fired after being given the opportunity to train effectively, that we should experiment with things like charter schools that are innovating in the classroom, that we should have high standards.

So my whole goal over the next 4 years is to make sure that whatever arguments are persuasive and backed up by evidence and facts and proof that they can work, that we are pulling people together around that kind of pragmatic agenda. And I think that there was an opportunity to do this with this recovery package because as I said, although there are some politicians who are arguing that we don't need a stimulus, there are very few economists who are making that argument.

I mean, you've got economists who were advising John McCain, economists who were advisers to George Bush—one and two—all suggesting that we actually needed a serious recovery package. And so when I hear people just say, "Oh, we don't need to do anything, this is a spending bill, not a stimulus bill." Without acknowledging that by definition, part of any stimulus package would include spending—that's the point. Then what I get a sense of is that there's some ideological blockage there that needs to be cleared up.

But I am the eternal optimist. I think that over time people respond to civility and rational argument. I think that's what the people of Elkhart and people around America are looking for. And that's what I'm—that's the kind of leadership I'm going to try to provide.

All right, thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 8:01 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George J. Mitchell; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commander, U.S. Central Command; Richard C. Holbrooke, U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan; and President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia. He also referred to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan. Reporters referred to Nouriel Roubini, professor of economics and international business, Stern School of Business, New York University; and Alexander E. Rodriguez, third baseman, New York Yankees.

Remarks on Economic Stabilization and a Question-and-Answer Session in Fort Myers, Florida

February 10, 2009

The President. All right, everybody. Thank you so much. Please have a seat. It is good to be in Florida, especially in February. [*Laughter*]

I want to acknowledge a number of people who are here who are just great friends and outstanding public servants. We've got Florida Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink; give Alex a big round of applause. We have your own mayor, Jim Humphrey. Thank you, Mayor; Representative Alan Grayson; Representative Allen Boyd; Representative Corrine Brown; Representative Kathy Castor; Representative Kendrick Meek; Representative Ron Klein; Representative Suzanne Kosmas; Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz; and Representative Robert Wexler. It's as fine a set of Congress people as you can imagine. Florida, you're lucky.

I want to give a special thanks to your Governor, Charlie Crist, for joining us here today. The thing about Governors is they understand our economic crisis in a way that maybe sometimes folks a little more removed don't understand. They're on the frontlines dealing with the economy every single day; they're having to make choices about the budget every single day. They know what it means to balance a budget when revenues are short and more and more people are asking for help. And Governor Crist shares my conviction that creating jobs and turning this economy around is a mission that transcends party. And when the town is burning, you don't check party labels; everybody needs to grab a hose. And that's what Charlie Crist is doing right here today.

Governor Crist and Governors across the country understand that. Mayors, like Mayor Humphrey, understands that. And I think that you understand it, too, which is what I want to talk about today.

Last night I addressed the Nation to explain why I believe we need to put the economic recovery plan that is before Congress in motion as soon as possible. But during the day, I had spent some time in Indiana talking to folks, in Elkhart. In Elkhart the unemployment rate went from 4.7 percent last year to 15.3 percent this year; one year, and the unemployment rate tripled.

Today I wanted to come to Florida, and I wanted to visit all of you in Fort Myers because you have seen hardship as well. You've seen a change in the economic conditions of your community. You see, all too often in Washington what happens is, is that people think in terms of numbers and statistics. They think about it in abstract terms. But when we say we've lost 3.6 million jobs since this recession began, nearly 600,000 in the past month alone; when we say that Lee County has seen its unemployment rate go from 3.5 percent to nearly 10 percent in less than 2 years; when we talk about the plummeting home prices and soaring foreclosure rates that have plagued this area; and the layoffs at companies like Kraft Construction and Chico's, companies that have sustained this community for years, we're not just talking about faceless numbers. We're talking about families. We're talking about some of the people in this town hall meeting today, your neighbors, your friends.

We're talking about people like Steve Adkins, who joined us today with his wife, Michelle, and their son, Bailey, and daughter, Josie. Steve is the president of a small construction company in Fort Myers that specializes in building and repairing schools. But work has slowed considerably, like it has across the board in the construction area. Now, he's done what he can to reduce overhead costs, but he still has been forced to lay off half his workforce, which means that many of those people may now be trying to figure out how are they going to pay their mortgage, how are they going to pay for the basic necessities of life, which puts us on a downward economic spiral.

Steve and Michelle have made sacrifices of their own: they've sold their home and moved into a smaller one. And that's what this debate is about: folks in Fort Myers and all across the country who have lost their livelihoods and don't know what will take its place; parents

who've lost their health care and lie awake at night praying their kids don't get sick; families who've lost the home that was the foundation of their American Dream; young people who put that college acceptance letter back in the envelope because they can't afford it.

That's what's behind the numbers; that's what's behind the statistics. That's the true measure of this economic crisis. Those are the stories I heard every time I came to Florida, because this isn't new. When we were campaigning down here before the election, I was hearing about Florida suffering the first recession that it had had in 16 years. We didn't know then how deep it was going to go. Well, it's gone deep; it's gotten worse. And the stories that I've heard here in Florida, and in Indiana, and all across the country, I carried with me to the White House.

I promised you back then that if elected President, I would do everything I could to help our communities recover, that I would not forget. And that's why I've come back here today, to tell you how I intend to keep that promise to make communities like Fort Myers stronger.

So the situation we face could not be more serious. I don't have to tell you that. We've inherited an economic crisis as deep and as dire as any since the Great Depression. And economists across the spectrum have warned, if we don't act immediately, then millions more jobs will disappear, the national unemployment rates will approach double digits, more people will lose their homes and their health care, and our Nation will sink into a crisis that at some point is going to be that much tougher to reverse. So we cannot afford to wait. We can't wait and see and hope for the best. I believe in hope, but I also believe in action.

We can't afford to posture and bicker and resort to the same failed ideas that got us into this mess in the first place. That's what the election was about. You rejected many of those ideas because you know they didn't work. You didn't send us to Washington because you were hoping for more of the same. You sent us there to change things. And that's exactly what I intend to do as President of the United States.

The problems that led us into this crisis are deep, they're widespread, and so we're going to have to do a lot of different things to get the economy moving again. We need to stabilize and repair our financial system. We need to get credit flowing again to families and businesses. We need to stem the spread of foreclosures that are sweeping this country.

My Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner outlined a plan to address these challenges just this morning. We know that in order to address our economic crisis, we're going to have to help homeowners, not just banks, but homeowners as well. Fort Myers had the highest foreclosure rate in the Nation last year. Entire neighborhoods are studded with foreclosure signs. Families across this city feel like they're losing their foothold on the American Dream, so—because when one person loses their home to foreclosure, that doesn't just affect that family; property values across the board start declining.

So we're going to do everything we can to help responsible homeowners here in Fort Myers and other hard-hit communities stay in their homes. If we want to truly turn this around, we've got to remember that the stronger our communities are, then the stronger the financial system would be. And change can't just happen from the top down, it's going to have to start from the bottom up.

Now, in addition to the housing situation, what we have to do is put people back to work. Last week, we saw a thousand men and women stand in line for just 35 Miami firefighter jobs; 35 jobs, a thousand people standing in line. It's a story repeated across the country. There's so much demand for jobs that just aren't there.

And that's both the paradox and the promise of this moment. At a time when so many Americans are looking for work, there's so much work that America needs done. That's why we put forward this plan for recovery and reinvestment. It's the simple idea at its core that we put people back to work doing the work that America needs done. It's a plan that will save or create up to 4 million jobs over the next 2 years. It will ignite spending by businesses and consumers alike. It will make the

investments necessary for lasting economic growth and prosperity.

Now, we'll begin by ensuring that Americans who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own can receive greater unemployment benefits and continue their health care coverage. That means an additional $100 per month to more than 760,000 Florida workers who've lost their jobs in this recession. It means extended unemployment benefits for another 170,000 folks who've been laid off and are looking for work but can't find any right now.

That's not just a moral responsibility, to help, give a lending hand to our fellow Americans in times of emergency, it makes good economic sense, because if you don't have money, you can't spend it. And if you don't spend it, that means businesses don't have customers. Our economy will continue to decline.

For that same reason, this recovery plan includes $1,000 of badly needed tax relief for middle class workers and families, putting money back in the pockets of nearly 6.9 million workers and their families here in Florida. And we will provide a partially refundable $2,500 per-student tax credit to help 195,000 Florida families send their kids to college, relieving your household budget. That provides household budgets relief right now, but it also rewards America in the long run with a highly skilled workforce.

And most importantly, this plan will put people to work right now by making direct investments in areas like health care and energy and education and infrastructure, investments that save jobs, and create new jobs and new businesses, and help our economy grow again.

Now, more than 90 percent of the jobs created by this plan will be in the private sector. Ninety percent. And they won't be make-work jobs; they'll be jobs that lay the groundwork for a lasting economic boom, jobs that put people to work today preparing America for tomorrow.

Jobs building wind turbines and solar panels and fuel efficient cars, doubling our investment in clean energy, helping end our dependence on foreign oil. Jobs upgrading our schools. Jobs creating 21st century classrooms and libraries and laboratories for millions of children across America. Jobs computerizing our health care system, which saves billions of dollars and countless lives. Jobs constructing broadband Internet lines that reach Florida's rural schools and small businesses, so they can connect and compete with their counterparts anywhere in the world. Jobs rebuilding our roads and our bridges and repairing our dangerously deficient dams and levees so we don't face another Katrina. And the jobs that Charlie Crist has to worry about, the jobs of firefighters and teachers and nurses and police officers that would otherwise be eliminated if we don't provide States some basic relief.

Now, of course, there are some critics—always critics—who say we can't afford to take on these priorities. But we have postponed and neglected them for too long. And because we have, our health care still costs too much. Our schools still fail too many of our children. Our dependence on foreign oil has actually grown since the 1970s, still threatens our economy and our security. We've seen the tragic consequences when our bridges crumble and our levees fail. They say we can't afford to take on these tasks. Florida, you know we cannot afford not to.

Now, I'm not going to tell you that this plan is perfect. I mean, it was produced in Washington. [*Laughter*] No plan is perfect. I also can't tell you with 100 percent certainty that everything in this plan will work exactly as we hope. But I can tell you with complete confidence that a failure to act in the face of this crisis will only worsen our problems. Doing nothing is not an option. You didn't send me to Washington to do nothing.

So we've had a good debate, we've had a good debate. That's part of what democracy is all about. But the time for talk is over. Folks here in Fort Myers and across America, they need help, they need action, and they need it now. Americans I've met understand that even with this plan our economy will likely be measured in years, not weeks or months.

Audience member. You got eight. [*Laughter*]

The President. For our TV audience, somebody said I had eight, which we're not clear about yet. Look, here's—you know, the American people—all of you—[*laughter*]—you've got common sense, you understand it took us a long

time to get into this fix. We're not going to get out of it overnight. But what you don't have patience for is just listening to a bunch of bickering in Washington and nothing getting done.

And I know that there are a lot of folks here in Fort Myers and across Florida that are struggling. But I also know, because I spent a lot of time in this State, that you got some of the best workers in the world here. You've got some of the best neighbors in the world who step up, who help each other, who make sacrifices when times are tough. I know that all that people are asking for is a chance to work hard. They're not looking for a handout. They just want to be able to work hard and translate that hard work into a good life for themselves and their families. So you're doing your part down here. It's time that Washington did its part too.

This is a responsibility that we did not ask for, but it is a responsibility we will accept for the sake of our future and our children's. And being here in Fort Myers with all of you, I am more confident than ever that we can set aside our differences; that if we commit ourselves to the work ahead and come together, then I guarantee you we can meet the great test of our times.

So thank you very much for your attention. Thanks for your attendance. And now we're going to start opening this thing up for some questions. Thank you, Fort Myers. Thank you.

Testing, one, two, three. All right, everybody have a seat. Now, here's how we're going to work this. There are folks in the audience who have microphones. Raise your microphones, guys. They will be going around, and I will be just calling on folks as they raise their hands. If you could introduce yourself when you ask—before you ask your question or make your comment. Because we've got a lot of people here and we've got a limited amount of time, try to keep your question relatively brief, and I'll try to keep my answer relatively brief. And I think I'll go girl-boy-girl-boy—[*laughter*]—so that I avoid any trouble. All right. And stand up when you ask your question as well, so we can all see you. All right.

So let's see, there's a young lady right there. Yes, right there.

Education Financing in Economic Stabilization Legislation

Q. Hi. My name is Jyoti Naik. I work for Edison State College. And I was wondering how much stress you're putting in your economic stimulus plan for higher education, because vocational training helps lower unemployment.

The President. Well, it's a great question. And we put a huge emphasis on education generally and higher education in particular.

Now, I already mentioned one provision that's in there, which is to provide a tax credit to help young people go to college and afford it. Now, that is not only helpful for the young person, it's also obviously helpful to household budgets, which means that there will be money that those households can spend on other things. And people will be accumulating less debt.

We're also—when we talk about money for school construction in the plan, we are not just talking about elementary schools or high schools, we're also talking about community colleges and public universities. There's a lot of unmet—undone work that needs to be done. And for us to be able to fund some of that work will not only improve, let's say, the science lab in a particular school or a vocational training facility, but it also will upgrade over time the skills of the workforce here in Fort Myers and in the surrounding community.

So we are going to be putting a lot of emphasis on job training, on school construction, and on financing of higher education. I think that's the highest priority. It's an example of how we can use a crisis and turn it into an opportunity. Because if we use this moment to address some things that we probably should have been doing over the last 10, 15, 20 years, then when we emerge from the crisis, the economy is going to be that much stronger.

If people who've been laid off of work are able to get a tax credit or a voucher to retrain so that now they have upgraded their skills, then they're going to be that much stronger when it comes to finding a job in the future. They'll boost their earnings, boost productivity in the community.

So I think it's very important for us to think both short term, as well as long term. And that's going to be one of my highest priorities as President. Okay?

All right. Gentleman in the tie, right behind you.

Home Mortgage Industry

Q. Welcome to Fort Myers, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you, sir.

Q. My name is Adam Palmer. So many of the lenders these days are unwilling to discuss any possibility of doing a loan modification program unless you're currently in default. Subsequently, this is penalizing responsible Americans who have lost all the equity in their property. What can be done to change that?

The President. Well, you're making a really important point. My Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner announced much of our financial restructuring plan. He's going to increase oversight, transparency. Some of you may have heard we're going to condition any taxpayer assistance to banks on them doing something serious about executive compensation. No more enormous bonuses for companies that taxpayers are helping out. But what he also pointed out is that we've got to provide some direct relief to homeowners.

Now, we didn't want the story about what we're doing with homeowners to be buried in this larger story today about how we're dealing with the financial system. So I'm going to be personally making an announcement in the next couple of weeks about what our overall housing strategy is going to be. But I think you identified the key issue, which is, look, if we're honest, there are probably some folks who bought homes that they couldn't afford. And no matter how much we help, they're not going to be able to make their mortgage payments. But the larger group of folks are folks who have made their mortgage payments, but because of foreclosures, property values have declined, they're now what's called "underwater," where the mortgage is worth more than the price of the home, the current value of the home.

And people may have been—people may be getting squeezed on their job, their incomes are lowering. And they're still doing what they're supposed to do, they're still making these payments every day, but it's getting harder and harder and harder.

So the question is, can we work to design a system where the banks recognize it's in their interest to avoid foreclosure? Because the bank is only going to get 40 cents on the dollar if there's a foreclosure. On the other hand, the borrower is going to have to probably, if they get some assistance, agree to give up some equity once housing prices recover, so that both sides are giving a little bit, but you avert the foreclosure. That's good not only for the homeowner, but it's good for the entire community, and it's good for property values throughout the State.

Now, there are a couple of wrinkles in order for us to accomplish this. For example, unfortunately, it used to be that when you took out a mortgage you went to the local bank, they gave you the loan, and they kept the mortgage right there in the bank. As I think a lot of people know, these days what happened was they took these mortgages, they wrapped them up in a big bundle, they sold slices of them on the stock market. And so you don't have any one person who actually owns the mortgage, which makes negotiations on a lot of this stuff very difficult.

Part of what we may have to do is to make some changes in the law that make it easier for the servicers, the people who take your check every day and are managing these portfolio of mortgages on behalf of a bunch of people who own bits and pieces of the mortgage, to make it easier for them to engage in these negotiations in an efficient way. And those are some of the issues that we'll be laying out over the next couple weeks.

But this is absolutely vital. No place is seeing tougher times because of the mortgage crisis than the people here in Florida and the people here in Fort Myers. And unless we address this in a serious way, we are not going to be able to get the economy back to where it needs to be. All right?

All right, let's see, this side of the room. Young lady right here who's standing right up front. She's waving at me—[*laughter*]. Right over there. Are we getting her? Well, I was actually pointing at her right there in the blue, but

now I feel bad, you were—I'll call on you, I promise. [*Laughter*] I promise you. You just, you just—don't worry. I know you've got a great question too. I didn't even see you down there.

Health Care Reform

Q. Hello, Mr. President.

The President. How are you?

Q. Welcome to southwest Florida. In light of the fact that you've inherited an economic crisis, where does your priority lie with health care reform?

The President. Well, it's a great question, and I think it is—there are some people who are making the argument that, "Well, you can't do anything about health care because the economy comes first." They don't understand that health care is the biggest component of our economy, and when it's broken that affects everything. I mean, we've got a system right now where the average person has seen—even if they've got health insurance, the average family has seen their premiums double over the last 8 years. Folks are paying twice as much. Copayments have gotten higher; deductibles have gotten higher. And now, with people losing their jobs, they're also losing their health care.

Businesses are also less competitive because of the fact that here in the United States, we spend more than anybody else does. Any other nation on Earth, per capita, we spend more on health care, but we don't get better results. And companies are paying for that. So when they're competing against—you know, if a U.S. carmaker is competing against a foreign carmaker, they've got all these extra health care costs that they've got to deal with.

And finally, Medicare and Medicare—or, Medicare and Medicaid are draining State budgets and Federal budgets in a way that's unsustainable over the long term.

So health care has to be part of the solution. Now, in the recovery package, there are a couple of things that we do immediately. Number one, we're providing some help to Governor Crist and the State because now they are getting more Medicaid claims, and we've got to make sure that they can just meet the basic needs of citizens here in Florida.

Number two is, what we have in this bill is a mechanism so that we will subsidize people to keep their health care even if they lose their job. How many people here know what COBRA is? All right, now, COBRA is the law that says that if you lose your job you can keep your health care, and you go through COBRA. Here's the only problem: If you've lost your job, who can afford $1,000 a month or $1,200 a month for health care? You can't afford it. So part of this plan says we will subsidize a significant portion of what your health insurance costs so that you can actually afford to keep your health care. That's number two.

Number three—and this is an example of using a crisis and converting it into an opportunity—one of the problems with our health care system, it is so inefficient, you go into the hospital, and what's the first thing you've got to do? You've got to—even if you've got insurance, what do you have to do? You have to fill out so many forms, and there's paperwork, and there's this, there's that. Then you go and you get your examination, and they've got a clipboard with all this paper on it. Then the doctor is writing out something, and the nurse can't read it, and—[*laughter*]. You know, the fact is, is that it causes huge amounts of medical errors. We've got all this bureaucracy. One of the simplest, most effective things that we could do is to convert from a paper system to a electronic data system.

Now, think about it. Health care is the only area where we still use paper. I mean, the banks, that's all computerized. So if you've got a credit card, that's all on a computer, so they can find you anytime you don't make a payment—[*laughter*]—and that computer is calculating every dime of interest you've got to pay. Right? It's all very efficient. But when it comes to health care, it's a disaster.

So what we did is, in this plan, in the House bill that passed, one of the things that we do is, we say we are going to computerize our health care system, institute health IT. That creates jobs right now for people to convert from a paper system to a computer system. But it also pays a long-term dividend by making the

health care system more efficient. So now, those are things that we're doing immediately.

We are—also then got to deal with the long-term problem of both cost and coverage. You've got over 45 million people who don't have health insurance, and people who do have health insurance are seeing their costs rise too fast. And so in addition to computerizing the health care system, we've got to emphasize prevention. We've got to make sure that people have regular check-ups. We made a downpayment on it this week. And I did it, by the way, with the help of a lot of these Members of Congress, by passing a new SCHIP, that's the children's health insurance bill that provides millions of children, who didn't have health insurance, health insurance.

My hope is, over the course of the year, I'm going to be able to work with Congress to move forward a bill that gets us on track to every single person in America being able to get affordable, decent health care coverage. We are a wealthy enough country to do it, and that's going to be one of my top priorities as President of the United States.

All right, it's a guy's turn. It's a guy's turn. Let's see, this gentleman in the cap right here. That's you. Who else got the—oh, I didn't see that one. [*Laughter*] All right, well, this guy right here, this guy. Hold on—no, no, I'm calling on this guy right here.

Job Creation/Bank Lending

Q. Also, welcome, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you.

Q. And my question to you today is, as you stated earlier, there are many of us here in the area that are unemployed and that have been unemployed for some time. And probably some people here have large families. And we have had the opportunity to receive unemployment, but yet we have not been able to get any other type of governmental assistance to help us during this crisis so that we can kind of be able to take the funds that we do have from unemployment to pay our bills.

Usually what happens is that when you apply for governmental assistance, they say, well, you made too much money. If you go from making $3,000 a year—a month to $1,100 a month, how are you able to take care of your family? Why can't we have that to be automatic that goes along with your unemployment tenure, that you can get government assistance that's an automatic for you?

The President. Well, look, unemployment insurance is not ideal. People want a job; they don't want unemployment insurance. But when the jobs aren't out here, it's tough. But I want to be honest with you, we are bumping up unemployment insurance. As I said, tens of thousands of people will be getting an extra hundred dollars a month, which doesn't sound like a lot, but that means an extra bill that you can pay.

I'll be honest with you, though, we're not going to be able to take it from 1,100 up to 3,000. So our priority has to be on job creation. We can reform unemployment insurance to make it more efficient, we have extended it, but ultimately, people want to work. And the priority of this package is to create jobs: create jobs in construction; create jobs in the health care system; create jobs in energy.

Something that we haven't talked about is the whole opportunity around clean energy. I mean, this package proposes to double our use of alternative fuels. It proposes that we weatherize homes all across the country. It proposes that we are starting a smart grid that allows energy—let's say you have solar energy produced in Florida; the smart grid would allow us to transport that energy to other States so that Florida could be an energy exporter. But right now we don't have the infrastructure in place to get that done.

So my priority is going to be on job creation. That is priority number one.

One other point that I want to make, because it hasn't come up; it came up a little bit with respect to the issue of housing. This recovery package, even if we pass it, is just one leg in the stool. In order to get the economy moving, we're also going to have to deal with the foreclosure crisis. We're also going to have to start getting banks and financial institutions to lend again, because right now there's a credit crunch out there. And a lot of small businesses that are out there, they're having trouble making payroll just because they can't get loans.

So we've got to get the lending moving again. And that's part of what my Treasury Secretary talked about today, working with the banks, tracking what they're doing. We already spent $350 billion, and that averted catastrophe, but what it didn't do is to create a clear, consistent, transparent credit process whereby we could see small businesses, consumers actually getting loans. And we're going to have to make that a top priority as we move ahead.

It's going to take some time because, frankly, the banks borrowed a lot of money, and they risked it on a lot of bad investments. And unwinding that and restabilizing the system is going to take some time. And I know how frustrating it is for taxpayers when they're looking and they're saying, "Let me get this straight; you've got a guy who's making $20 million a year, who ran his bank into the ground, and now we've got to come in and clean up the mess." Now, that's something that, it just makes you mad. I understand that.

But recognize that whether we like it or not, credit is the lifeblood of our economy. If consumers can't borrow for a car loan, then cars don't move out of the dealership. And if the dealership can't move its cars, then Detroit and all those suppliers aren't going to be making cars. And on and on it goes. So we've got to do something about getting credit flowing again, and that's going to be one of my top priorities as President.

All right, there's the young lady who I—who I thought—who thought I had called on her and I hadn't. I don't want her mad at me. [*Laughter*] She'll talk about me. [*Laughter*]

Economic Stabilization Legislation

Q. Thank you for taking my question, Mr. President.

The President. Sure, go ahead.

Q. I'm just tickled pink that you came to visit us.

The President. Oh, thank you.

Q. Your stimulus package outlines over $800 billion. And I know a huge portion of it is designated for giving individual States the money that they need to rebuild. Is there any provisions in your stimulus package that actually will give back to the taxpayers individually, that we'd all get stimulus checks——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——to jump-start the economy——

The President. Yes.

Q. And what provisions or what amounts are they actually looking at for the taxpayers?

The President. Here's what we're looking at, is—and this is actually a commitment that I made during the campaign. I said that we had to change our tax system where, instead of giving all the tax breaks to the wealthiest few, that we start giving tax breaks to middle class families who are struggling to make ends meet. So I made that commitment even before the crisis.

So in the package that we put forward, what we have is $1,000 for working families, $1,000 in additional, immediate tax relief that would start flowing right away. And so it would offset a lot of the payroll taxes that people are paying. And that would be—again, $1,000 may not sound a lot—like a lot to some, but I tell you what, if you're making $30,000, $40,000, $50,000 a year, having an extra $1,000 during some tight times can really make a difference. So that is a central part of the package.

We've also got some other tax cuts that are targeted at small businesses because, again, they're under enormous pressure right now as business is declining. But part of what I hope to do is to show that by providing tax cuts directly to the middle class, that's the best way to reinvigorate the economy when it comes to tax cuts, not just giving tax cuts and expecting it all to trickle down. If you put it directly into the pockets of people who are really going to need it, then they spend it. And when they spend it, that means that the economy is moving. And that's what we're going to try to do in this package. All right?

Okay, gentleman's turn. By the way, I just want to announce that the Senate just passed our recovery and reinvestment plan. That's good. So that's good news; that's good news. That's because—that's good news. That's good news, and I want to thank all the Members of the Senate who moved the process forward. We've still got to get the House bill and the Senate bill to match up before it gets sent to

my desk, so we've got a little more work to do over the next couple of days. But it's a good start. And you know why it passed? Because they knew I was coming down to Fort Myers. They didn't want to mess with folks in Fort Myers. Right? They said, "We don't want folks in Fort Myers mad at us." [*Laughter*]

All right. Gentleman back there in the blue shirt and the tie. Right there.

Education Financing in Economic Stabilization Legislation

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. First of all, I wanted to thank you very much for coming to listen to us today.

The President. Thank you.

Q. This has not happened in the last 8 years. My name is Andy Irvin. I'm a local commercial contractor here in town. We have been building and remodeling schools for the last 10 years or so. How, in your stimulus plan, do you get money down to the States and down to the counties to continue that program?

The President. Well, what we would do, and the fact that there's already a program in place will make it that much easier, we would be working with Governor Crist and Alex Sink and others in the State government, as well as local school superintendents in county governments, and where there's a school that needs repair, we'd go in and repair it.

But what we'd also want to do—we're not looking just to put on some new paint. I mean, that's nice. But let me give you an example of some of the things that we can do. There are a lot of schools in this country that don't have state-of-the-art science laboratories. And for us to not only modify the building, but also to go into some of these classrooms and redesign them in ways that allow kids to get state-of-the-art learning in science and math, I mean, that's a gift that keeps on giving.

So if there's a mechanism in place, then what we're going to do is we're going to make sure that that money is funneled as quickly as possible to those local school districts in those schools that need help. And, hopefully, you'll be able to get some work, and you'll be able to keep your folks on payroll. And that will make all the difference in the world for the economy generally here in Fort Myers. All right? Okay.

This young lady has been waiting very patiently. And she's just been standing there and making me look all guilty. [*Laughter*] So go ahead. Here, you've got the microphone right behind you.

Unemployment and Homelessness

Q. Thank you very much. I first want to say I respect you, and I am so grateful for you.

The President. Thank you.

Q. I've been praying for you.

The President. I believe in prayer, so I appreciate that.

Q. I have an urgent need on unemployment and homelessness, a very small vehicle for my family and I to live in. We need urgent—and the housing authority has 2-year waiting lists. And we need something more than a vehicle and the parks to go to. We need our own kitchen and our own bathroom. Please help.

The President. Well, I—listen, I—what's your name? What's your name?

Q. It's Henrietta Hughes.

The President. Okay, Ms. Hughes. Well, we're going to do everything we can to help you. But there are a lot of people like you. And we're going to do everything we can, all right? But the—I'll have my staff talk to you after this, after the town hall, all right?

All right. Back here. These folks have been neglected back here. The gentleman right here. Just go ahead and give him the mike, because I don't want him to fall over.

Economic Stabilization Legislation

Q. Mr. President, I'm a retired high school teacher, and I have this question. Last night, I was so impressed by your news conference; I haven't heard this in 8 years. My question was about your stimulus package. You said we have to be patient. The American people are notorious for not being patient. [*Laughter*] How are you going to deal with that problem?

The President. Well, look, my—first of all, I think the American people understand, as I said before, that we didn't get into this fix overnight, and we're not going to get out of it overnight. I

think people understand that it is a big and very complicated problem, and that we're going to have to try a bunch of different things to get the economy moving again.

My hope is, is that the American people expect from me the same thing that I expect from myself, which is not to have every answer or to never make a mistake, but to feel like every day me and my staff, that we are thinking about you and your lives; that we're talking to the most knowledgeable people on these problems; that we're making the best decisions for what's good for working families and middle class folks, and not just the powerful and the well-connected; that we are open to any idea, whether it comes from a Democrat or a Republican or a vegetarian—[*applause*]—or a—it doesn't matter—and that we are going to be working as hard as we can to solve these problems.

Now, you know, that is how I judge myself every single day. I ask myself: Did I work as hard as I could? Did I seek out the best possible advice? Did I stay focused on the people who sent me to Washington? And if I—if something is not working and I make a mistake, am I open-minded enough to admit it and then move on and try something else that works? And that's the best I can do.

Now, look, I won't lie to you. If it turns out that a few years from now people don't feel like the economy has turned around, that we're still having problems, that folks are still unemployed, that our health care system is not more efficient, then, you know, you guys won't applaud me next time I come down here, you know. [*Laughter*] There may be a couple of die-hards, Obama folks out there, but—[*applause*]—but, you know. So, I mean, I expect to be judged by results. And there's no excuse—I'm not going to make any excuses. If stuff hasn't worked and people don't feel like I've led the country in the right direction, then you'll have a new President.

But I do think the American people understand that these are some really big, tough problems, and it's going to take some time for us to get ourselves out of it. And I have great faith in the American people and their basic wisdom.

So, all right, we've got, young lady right here. Yes, go ahead.

Transportation Infrastructure

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I'm so grateful to be able to call you that. I met you in Boston in 2004 and was so impressed by you and got to speak with you.

The President. Thank you so much. I appreciate that.

Q. I'm now an elected official myself. I serve on the city council in Bonita Springs, Florida. Hey, Bonita. My mayor is here, as well. He endorsed you.

The President. Good to see you, Mr. Mayor. I like that in you. [*Laughter*]

Q. Yes, he's a good man and my fellow councilman. Cities throughout Florida are having a difficult time because of the mortgage crisis. Growth has slowed. We fund our transportation infrastructure needs through impact fees. Now that we're not getting that, we're falling behind in our ability to keep up with road work, municipal water projects, being able to bring some solar panel down here to an inland port. We need commuter rail. We need lots of things for infrastructure in this State. If we ran out of oil today, we would not be able to move anything around in this State, honest to God. And I hope you're going to help get that thing in the gulf—to turn that around. We don't want to drill oil in the gulf, thank you. Right on. We've got a beautiful, pristine State.

So I want to ask you, how will we get our State going again in transportation? I'm very worried about our dependence on foreign oil, and I don't want to drill in the gulf. I want some commuter rail, and I want to improve our transportation. Thank you.

The President. Well, we have targeted billions of dollars at infrastructure spending. And States all across the country are going through what Florida is going through. There was a study done by the American Association of Engineers—that might not be the exact title, but engineers from all across the country. We get a "D" in infrastructure all across the country. We saw what happened in Minneapolis, where a bridge collapsed and

resulted in tragedy. And not only do we need to rebuild our roads and our bridges, our ports, our levees, our dams, but we also have to plan for the future.

This is the same example of turning crisis into opportunity. This should be a wake-up call for us. You go to Shanghai, China right now, and they've got high-speed rail that puts our railroads to shame. They've got ports that are state of the art. Their airports are—compared to the airports that we—you go through Beijing Airport, and you compare that to Miami Airport? Now, look, the—this is America.

We are—we always had the best infrastructure. We were always willing to invest in the future. You know, somebody—Governor Crist mentioned Abraham Lincoln. He—in the middle of the Civil War, in the midst of all this danger and peril, what did he do? He helped move the intercontinental railroad. He helped to start land-grant colleges. He understood that even when you're in the middle of crisis you've got to keep your eye on the future.

So transportation, when it—is not just fixing our old transportation systems, but it's also imagining new transportation systems. That's why I'd like to see high-speed rail where it can be constructed. I would like for us to invest in mass transit because potentially that's energy efficient. And I think people are a lot more open now to thinking regionally, in terms of how we plan our transportation infrastructure. The days where we're just building sprawl forever, those days are over. I think that Republicans, Democrats, everybody recognizes that that's not a smart way to design communities.

So we should be using this money to help spur this kind of innovative thinking when it comes to transportation. That will make a big difference. All right?

Okay, I've only got time for one more question. I feel bad about it. All right, it's got to be a guy. So, women, you got to all sit down. Women, you got to all sit down. It's got to be a man. All right. I'm going to call on this guy, because he had the cap, and he thought I had called on him and I didn't. So all right, right here. The guy with the cap, last question. Of course, now it better be a good one. Go ahead.

Taxes/Health Care Reform

Q. Oh, it is such a blessing to see you, Mr. President. Thank you for taking time out of your day. Oh, gracious God, thank you so much.

The President. All right, what's the question? [*Laughter*]

Q. All right, Mr. President, my name is Julio Osegueda. I'm currently a student at Edison State College in my second semester. And, okay, I've been at the same job, which is McDonald's, for 4½ years because of the fact that I can't find another job. Now, with the fact that I've been there for as long as I've been there, do you have any plan or any idea of making one that has been there for a long time receive any better benefits than what they've already received?

The President. Well, I tell you what. First of all, a couple things I'd like to say. Number one, the fact that you are working as hard as you're working at a job that I know doesn't always pay as well as some other jobs, I think that's a source of pride for you that shows that you're doing the right thing.

Now, the second thing is, is that you will actually benefit from the tax breaks that we're talking about, so you'll be able to keep a little bit of extra money because we're going to offset your payroll tax. That's going to help. I don't—I assume that you're not getting health care through your job, and so one of the things that we want to do is reform the health care system so that you all have access to health care in your job.

But the thing that I'm really interested in is, you say you're going to school, what are you studying?

Q. I'm looking to study and majoring in communications. Hopefully, being a broadcaster or a disc jockey.

The President. Well, you sound like you've got a good communications skills.

Q. Thank you so much.

The President. So part of what we want to do is we want to make it easier for you to afford going to college by giving you this refundable tax credit for your tuition. Because young people like Julio, who have that much enthusiasm and that much energy, we've got to make sure that

we are giving them a pathway so that they can educate themselves and go as far as their dreams take them.

Thank you very much, Fort Myers. I appreciate you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:11 p.m. at the Harborside Event Center. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Ben L. Nelson of Bonita Springs, FL.

Remarks on Economic Stabilization in Springfield, Virginia
February 11, 2009

Thank you everybody. I am extraordinarily pleased to be here with Virginia's Governor, an exceptional leader and a great friend of mine, Tim Kaine.

Not far from where we're standing, back in Washington, we continue to have a debate about our economic plan, a plan to create or save more than 3 million jobs in the next few years. And I welcome that conversation. But I am here today because you don't need to travel very far from that debate to see why enacting this plan is both urgent and essential to our recovery, to see that the time for talk has passed and that now is the time to take bold and swift action.

We've passed a version of the American recovery and reinvestment plan through the House. Yesterday we passed a version through the Senate. Now we've got to get a final version to my desk so that I can sign it and so that here in Virginia and across the country the people can use it.

In Virginia, the unemployment rate has surged to its highest level in more than a decade, and it might have been a lot worse were it not for the leadership of Governor Tim Kaine and former Governor, now Senator, Mark Warner. Unemployment claims have doubled in recent months compared to last year. Nationwide, we've lost 3.6 million jobs since this recession began, nearly 600,000 this past month alone.

These are the people I talked to in Elkhart, Indiana, on Monday, which has lost jobs faster than anyplace else in America, with an unemployment rate of over 15 percent. They're the people I met yesterday in Fort Myers, Florida, which has been among the places hardest hit by the foreclosure crisis. These are the folks looking for work, and these are the folks who want to work.

At the same time, look around us. Look at this construction site right where we're standing. We're surrounded by unmet needs and unfinished business in our schools, in our roads, in the systems we employ to treat the sick, in the energy we use to power our homes. And that's the core of my plan: putting people to work doing the work that America needs done.

We're here today because there's a lot of work that needs to be done on our Nation's congested roads and highways, crumbling bridges and levees, and crowded trains and transit systems. Because we know that with investment, we can create transportation and communications systems ready for the demands of the 21st century, and because we also know what happens when we fail to make those investments.

We've seen the consequences of a bridge collapse in Minneapolis. We've seen the consequences of levees failing in New Orleans. We see the consequences every day in ways that may be less drastic, but are, nonetheless, burdens on local communities and economies: time with family lost because of longer daily commutes, growth held back by streets that can't handle new business, money wasted on fuel that's burned in worsening traffic. These are problems that the people of northern Virginia understand acutely.

Governor Kaine understands it acutely. And your Governor has worked valiantly to relieve these transportation pressures while, at the same time, facing enormous budget pressures. What's worse, now States are facing acute new responsibilities during this recession. Local governments are seeing more people filing unemployment claims, signing up for Medicaid, requesting government services. And all the

while, people are spending less, earning less, and paying less in taxes.

So across the country, States need help. And with my plan, help is what they will get. My plan contains the largest investment increase in our Nation's infrastructure since President Eisenhower created the national highway system half a century ago. We'll invest more than $100 billion and create nearly 400,000 jobs rebuilding our roads, our railways, our dangerously deficient dams, bridges, and levees.

Here in Virginia, my plan will create or save almost 100,000 jobs doing work at sites just like this one. Where we're standing, that could mean hundreds of construction jobs. And the benefits of jobs we create directly will multiply across the economy.

For example, this kind of infrastructure project requires heavy equipment. Caterpillar, which manufactures the machines used in this project, has announced some 20,000 layoffs in the last few weeks. And today the chairman and CEO of Caterpillar said that if the American recovery and reinvestment plan passes, his company would be able to rehire some of those employees.

Tomorrow I'm going to East Peoria, Illinois, to visit a Caterpillar manufacturing plant to talk to these workers, because what's at stake here are not abstract numbers or abstract concepts. We're talking about real families that we can help and real jobs that we can save.

My plan will also give tax cuts to 3 million Virginia workers and their families. And we'll provide an additional $100 per month in unemployment benefits to nearly a quarter-million workers in Virginia who've lost their jobs and extend benefits to 46,000 more workers who aren't currently eligible.

So we're at the doorstep of getting this plan through the Congress, but the work is not over. When we do, the challenge will shift to administering successfully this endeavor of enormous scope and scale.

Now, there are those who've expressed the opinion that we won't be able to do it, who say that this plan is too big to be implemented effectively and efficiently. And the fact is, there's a certain amount of skepticism, much of it justified, by what we're accustomed to seeing in Washington. So I understand these concerns, but I'm confident that we can do things differently and better.

As President, I expect to be judged—and should be judged—by the results of this program. That's why I refused to allow even a single dollar in this legislation to be spent on earmarks. And that's why we're going to put information about every dollar that's spent, including the money spent on projects like this one, on a new web site called recovery.gov, so that the American people can see where their money is going. And that's why I will appoint an oversight board that will be charged with monitoring my plans as part of an unprecedented effort to root out waste and inefficiency. And this board will be advised by experts—not just government experts, not just politicians, but citizens with years of expertise in management, economics, and accounting.

We're going to do more than has ever been done before to make certain that every tax dollar is spent wisely and on its intended purpose. So we're going to hold the Federal Government to new standards of accountability. And just as we demand new accountability for ourselves, we're going to demand this kind of accountability from the States and cities as well. And I know Tim Kaine and other Governors and mayors around the country would expect nothing less.

So much depends on what we do at this moment. It's not just about the future of my administration, it's about the future of our families and communities, our economy and our country. We are going to do this carefully and transparently and effectively as possible because so much is on the line. And that's what we've already begun to do, drafting this plan with a level of openness for which the American people have asked and which this situation demands.

So I, once again, thank Governor Kaine for welcoming me to the Commonwealth of Virginia once again. I want to thank him for his support of this plan that's so urgent for the people he represents and for the people that I've met throughout this great State and throughout the country.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:18 a.m. at a Fairfax County Parkway Connector site. In his remarks, he referred to James W. Owens, chairman and chief executive officer, Caterpillar, Inc.

Statement on Representative John D. Dingell, Jr.'s Years of Federal Service
February 11, 2009

It gives me great pleasure to commend Chairman John Dingell, the dean of the U.S. House of Representatives, who today becomes the longest serving Member in the history of the House. Since 1955, Chairman Dingell has represented the people of Michigan's 15th District with distinction.

Over the past 53 years, Chairman Dingell has been a champion for the health and well-being of hard-working Americans. Following in the footsteps of his father, the Honorable John Dingell, Sr., Chairman Dingell has introduced legislation to provide national health insurance for all Americans in each and every Congress. Seniors throughout America have Chairman Dingell to thank for his instrumental role in passage of the 1965 Medicare Act and for his innumerable efforts since then.

Through his hard work, Chairman Dingell reminds us that we have a solemn duty to protect our natural heritage for future generations. As a young Congressman, Chairman Dingell authored one of the first bills to protect America's wetlands and played a key role in the 1964 National Wilderness Act. Since then, he's sponsored legislation to improve water quality, protect endangered species, expand sources of renewable energy, and clean up toxic waste.

Chairman Dingell has long strived to ensure that every tax dollar is used wisely, and that we have a more open, honest, and accessible Government. In particular, his investigations into waste, fraud, and abuse have protected American consumers from inferior Government contracting, deceptive drug marketing, and insider trading.

On behalf of the American people, let me say, "Thank you, Chairman Dingell, for your decades of distinguished service on behalf of 15th District." As dean of the U.S. House, you are a model of tireless commitment for all of your colleagues. I look forward to working with you in the months and years to come as we endeavor to protect and improve the well-being of all Americans.

Statement on Congressional Passage of Economic Stabilization Legislation
February 11, 2009

I want to thank the Democrats and Republicans in Congress who came together around a hard-fought compromise that will save or create more than 3.5 million jobs and get our economy back on track. Just today, the CEO of Caterpillar said that if this American recovery and reinvestment plan is passed, his company would be able to rehire some of the employees they've been forced to lay off. It's also a plan that will provide immediate tax relief to families and businesses, while investing in priorities like health care, education, energy, and infrastructure that will grow our economy once more. I'm grateful to the House Democrats for starting this process, and for Members in the House and Senate for moving it along with the urgency that this moment demands.

NOTE: The statement referred to James W. Owens, chairman and chief executive officer, Caterpillar, Inc.

Statement on Digital Television Conversion Delay Legislation
February 11, 2009

During these challenging economic times, the needs of American consumers are a top priority of my administration. This law, which was crafted in a bipartisan way and passed overwhelmingly in the House and Senate, ensures that our citizens will have more time to prepare for the conversion. Millions of Americans, including those in our most vulnerable communities, would have been left in the dark if the conversion had gone on as planned, and this solution is an important step forward as we work to get the Nation ready for digital TV. My administration will continue to work with leaders in Congress, broadcasters, consumer groups, and the telecommunications industry to improve the information and assistance available to our citizens in advance of June 12.

NOTE: The statement referred to S. 352, approved February 11, which was assigned Public Law No. 111–4.

Remarks at the Reopening of Ford's Theatre
February 11, 2009

Thank you. Please, everybody have a seat. I will be brief, though, I promise.

What a spectacular evening. Michelle and I are so pleased to be here to rededicate this hallowed space. We know that Ford's Theatre will remain a place where Lincoln's legacy thrives, where his love of the humanities and belief in the power of education have a home, and where his generosity of spirit are reflected in all the work that takes place.

This has been an extraordinarily fitting tribute to Abraham Lincoln that we've seen and heard from some of our most celebrated icons of stage and of screen, because Lincoln himself was a great admirer of the arts. It's said he could even quote portions of "Hamlet" and "Macbeth" by heart, as we've seen here this evening. And so I somehow think this event captured an essential part of the man whose life we celebrate tonight.

Now, as commemorations take place across this country on the bicentennial of our 16th President's birth, there will be reflections on all he was and all he did for this Nation that he served. But while there are any number of moments that reveal the exceptional nature of this singular figure, there is one in particular that I want to share with you.

Not far from here stands our Nation's Capitol, a landmark familiar to us all, but one that looked very different in Lincoln's time. For it remained unfinished until the end of the war. The laborers who built the dome came to work wondering whether each day would be their last, whether the metal they were using for its frame would be requisitioned for the war and melted down into bullets. But each day went by without any orders to halt construction, so they kept on working, and they kept on building.

When President Lincoln was finally told of all the metal being used at the Capitol, his response was short and clear: "That is as it should be." The American people needed to be reminded, he believed, that even in a time of war, the work would go on; that even when the Nation itself was in doubt, the future was being secured; and that on that distant day when the guns fell silent, a national capitol would stand, with a statue of Freedom at its peak, as a symbol of unity in the land still mending its divisions.

It is this sense of unity that is so much a part of Lincoln's legacy. For despite all that divided us—North and South, black and white—he had an unyielding belief that we were, at heart, one nation and one people. And because of Abraham Lincoln and all who've carried on his work in the generations since, that is what we remain today. And it is for that reason that we are able to gather here this evening.

Thank you, all of you, for a spectacular evening. Thank you for those who helped to

rededicate this theatre. Thank you for those who are serving this Nation. I'm very grateful to all of you. Good night.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:10 p.m.

Remarks at a Lincoln Bicentennial Celebration
February 12, 2009

Thank you. Thank you. Please be seated. Thank you very much. Madam Speaker, Leader Reid, Members of Congress, dear friends, former colleagues, it is a great honor to be here, a place where Lincoln served, was inaugurated, and where the Nation he saved bid him a last farewell. As we mark the bicentennial of our 16th President's birth, I cannot claim to know as much about his life and works as many who are also speaking today, but I can say that I feel a special gratitude to this singular figure who in so many ways made my own story possible and in so many ways made America's story possible.

It is fitting that we are holding this celebration here at the Capitol, for the life of this building is bound ever so closely to the times of this immortal President. Built by artisans and craftsmen, but also immigrants and slaves, it was here, in the rotunda, that Union soldiers received help from a makeshift hospital; it was downstairs, in the basement, that they were baked bread to give them strength; and it was in the Senate and House chambers where they slept at night and spent some of their days.

What those soldiers saw when they looked on this building was a very different sight than the one we see today, for it remained unfinished until the end of the war. The laborers who built the dome came to work wondering each day whether that would be their last, whether the metal they were using for its frame would be requisitioned for the war and melted down into bullets. But each day went by without any orders to halt construction, and so they kept on working and kept on building.

When President Lincoln was finally told of all the metal being used here, his response was short and clear: "That is as it should be." The American people needed to be reminded, he believed, that even in a time of war, the work would go on, the people's business would continue; that even when the Nation itself was in doubt, its future was being secured; and that on that distant day, when the guns fell silent, a national capitol would stand, with a statue of Freedom at its peak, as a symbol of unity in a land still mending its divisions.

It is this sense of unity, this ability to plan for a shared future, even at a moment where our Nation was torn apart, that I reflect on today. And while there are any number of moments that reveal that particular side of this extraordinary man, Abraham Lincoln—that particular aspect of his leadership—there's one that I'd like to share with you today.

In the war's final weeks, aboard Grant's flagship, the River Queen, President Lincoln was asked what was to be done with the rebel armies once General Lee surrendered. With victory at hand, Lincoln could have sought revenge. He could have forced the South to pay a steep price for their rebellion. But despite all the bloodshed and all the misery that each side had exacted upon the other, and despite his absolute certainty in the rightness of the cause of ending slavery, no Confederate soldier was to be punished, Lincoln ordered. They were to be treated, as he put it, "liberally all round." What Lincoln wanted was for Confederate troops to go back home and return to work on their farms and in their shops. He was even willing, he said, to "let them have their horses to plow and . . . their guns to shoot crows with."

That was the only way, Lincoln knew, to repair the rifts that had torn this country apart. It was the only way to begin the healing that our Nation so desperately needed. What Lincoln never forgot, not even in the midst of civil war, was that despite all that divides us—North and South, black and white—we were, at heart, one nation and one people, sharing a bond as Americans that could bend but would not break.

And so even as we meet here today, in a moment when we are far less divided than in Lincoln's day, but when we are once again debating the critical issues of our time—and debating them sometimes fiercely—let us remember that we are doing so as servants of the same flag, as representatives of the same people, and as stakeholders in a common future. That is the most fitting tribute we can pay, the most lasting monument we can build, to that most remarkable of men, Abraham Lincoln. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:47 a.m. at the U.S. Capitol.

Remarks at a Caterpillar Plant in East Peoria, Illinois
February 12, 2009

Thank you, everybody. It's good to be back home. Thank you. Thank you so much. Thank you. Please, everybody have a seat. Have a seat.

Well, first of all, let me thank Dan Armstrong for his wonderful introduction and participation in this event. And we are going to be thinking about you and your family each and every day in the coming months. I want to thank Peoria's own Ray LaHood, who is doing outstanding work as my Transportation Secretary. Ray comes from a long line of Republicans I love, starting with Bob Michel and—you know, they're just—I think there's a common-sense, Midwestern, can-do, bipartisan attitude that Ray represents, and I am so pleased that he's in my Cabinet.

Now, his successor, Congressman Schock, where is he? He's back here; he's right here—stand up, Aaron. This is a—Aaron's still trying to make up his mind about our recovery package, so he has the chance to be in the mold of Bob Michel and Ray LaHood. And so we know that all of you are going to talk to him after our event, because he's a very talented young man. I've got great confidence in him to do the right thing for the people of Peoria.

I also want to thank Jim Owens, who I've gotten to know and is one of the top CEOs that we have in the country and he—[*applause*]. You know, Jim is obviously confronted with some tough choices, like every CEO is right now, but what I'm absolutely confident in is he's thinking about the company's long-term growth, and he cares about his workers. He cares about the long term and not just the short term, and I appreciate him agreeing to serve as one of our economic advisers during this process. And I think this company is going to be in good hands with him at the helm. So thank you very much, Jim, for being a part of this event today.

Well, you notice I've been traveling a little bit. I had to come to Peoria. You have to see how things are playing in Peoria. We come together today, as Jim said, at a difficult moment for our country.

You know what, I know I'm already in my speech, but there's one other thing I forgot to do. There's a guy here who I served with in the state senate. He's just a good buddy of mine; I love him to death. Give George Shadid a big round of applause. I just spotted him. [*Applause*] Stand up, George. I like his wife more, but George is okay. [*Laughter*]

We come together today at a difficult moment for our country and for this great American company. In recent weeks, there's been a lot of talk in Washington about how to address our economic crisis, with a lot of back and forth about dollars and numbers. But here's the thing: When we say we've lost 3.6 million jobs since this recession began—nearly 600,000 last month alone—when we talk about the 22,000 layoffs announced here at Caterpillar, a company that has sustained this community for more than 80 years and that had one of its banner years just last year, then you know this isn't about figures on a balance sheet; it's about families that many of you probably know. It's about folks like Dan all across this State and all across this country, folks who are losing their jobs and their health care and their homes that were their foothold on the American Dream.

And it's about the ripple effects across this community, from restaurants with fewer customers because folks can't afford to eat out anymore, to shops that can't sell their goods because people can't afford to buy them, to the

companies that do business with Caterpillar but now find themselves cutting back because Caterpillar is cutting back.

So what's happening at this company tells us a larger story about what's happening with our Nation's economy, because, in many ways, you can measure America's bottom line by looking at Caterpillar's bottom line.

Caterpillar builds the equipment that moves the earth. Your machines plow the farms that feed our families, build the towers that shape our skylines, lay the roads that connect our communities, power the trucks that deliver our goods, and more.

So those 22,000 layoffs aren't just a crisis for those families or for the communities like Peoria and Decatur and Aurora, they are an urgent warning sign for America, because when a company as good and successful and efficient and lean and mean as Caterpillar is cutting back production and shedding jobs, that means we're not building up this country. It means we're not building new homes and offices or rebuilding crumbling schools and failing infrastructure.

In short, it means we're standing still. And in this new global economy, standing still is the surest way to end up falling behind. Standing still is not an option. It's not who we are; it's not who we have to be. Right now, we have a once-in-a-generation chance to act boldly, to turn adversity into opportunity and use this crisis as a chance to transform our economy for the 21st century.

That is the driving purpose of the recovery and reinvestment plan that I've put before Congress. It's a plan that will save or create more than 3.5 million jobs over the next 2 years, that will ignite spending by businesses and consumers and make the investments necessary for lasting economic growth and prosperity.

Now, these past few weeks, we've had a spirited debate in Washington about this plan. And not everybody shares the same view about how we should move forward. At times, our discussions have been contentious. But that's a good thing. Diverse viewpoints are the lifeblood of our democracy; debating them is how we learn from each other's perspective, we temper each other's excesses, we make better decisions.

But the debate is now coming to an end. The bill has passed the House, and it's passed the Senate. It's been reconciled, and now it's going back to those two chambers so it can get on my desk. It is time for Congress to act, and I hope they act in a bipartisan fashion. But no matter how they act, when they do, when they finally pass our plan, I believe it will be a major step forward on our path to economic recovery.

And I'm not the only one who thinks so. Yesterday Jim, the head of Caterpillar, said that if Congress passes our plan, this company will be able to rehire some of the folks who were just laid off. And that's a story I'm confident will be repeated at companies across the country, companies that are currently struggling to borrow money selling their products, struggling to make payroll, but could find themselves in a different position when we start implementing the plan. Rather than downsizing, they may be able to start growing again. Rather than cutting jobs, they may be able to create them again.

That's the goal at the heart of this plan: to create jobs. And not just any jobs, not just make-work jobs, but putting people to work doing the work that America needs done: repairing our infrastructure, modernizing our schools and our hospitals, promoting the clean alternative energy sources that will finally help us declare independence from foreign oil.

So once Congress passes this plan, and I sign it into law, a new wave of innovation, activity, and construction will be unleashed all across America. We'll put people to work building wind turbines and solar panels and fuel-efficient cars. We'll upgrade our schools, creating 21st century classrooms and libraries and labs for millions of children across America. We'll computerize our health care system to save billions of dollars and countless lives; lay down broadband Internet lines to connect rural schools and small businesses so they can compete with their counterparts anywhere in the world; rebuilding our crumbling roads and bridges; repairing our dangerous dams and levees so we don't face another Katrina.

Think about all the work out there to be done, and Caterpillar will be selling the equipment that does the work. And in addition to saving and creating jobs, we'll also ensure that folks in places like Peoria who've lost their jobs through no fault of their own can receive greater unemployment benefits and continue their health care coverage.

Here in Illinois, that will mean an additional $100 per month to more than 820,000 workers who've lost their jobs. It means extended unemployment benefits for another 145,000 folks who've been laid off, are out there busy looking for work, but haven't found a job yet. It's not just our moral responsibility to help them, it also makes good economic sense. If you don't have money, you can't spend it. And if people aren't spending, our economy will continue to decline.

And for that same reason, the plan will provide badly needed middle class tax relief, putting money back into the pockets of just about everybody here, nearly 4.9 million workers and their families here in Illinois, so you can pay your bills and meet your families' needs during a downturn.

In the end, that's what the recovery plan is about. It's about giving people a way to make a living, support their families, and live out their dreams.

Americans aren't looking for a handout. They just want to work. They're meeting their responsibilities. You're meeting your responsibilities. But when you start seeing an economic crisis of this magnitude, everybody's got to chip in; everybody's got to pull together. Politics has to stop, and we've got to get the job done.

Passing this plan is an important step, but it's just one step. It's only the beginning of what we're going to have to do to turn around our economy. So to truly address this crisis, we're also going to need to address the home mortgage crisis. We're going to have to get credit flowing again. We need to reform our financial markets, both to restore trust and ensure that a crisis like this can never happen again. And whether it's rebuilding our schools or reforming our health care system or investing in clean energy, much work remains to lay the foundation for long-term economic growth and fiscal responsibility.

We've got to spend some money now to pull us out of this recession. But as soon as we're out of this recession, we've got to get serious about starting to live within our means, instead of leaving debt for our children and our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren. That's not the responsible way. That's not how folks here in Peoria operate in their own lives, and they should expect the Government is equally responsible. So the road ahead is not an easy one. Some of our plans might not always work out exactly the way we'd like. Our recovery will likely be measured in terms of years and not months.

But to anyone who might feel doubtful or discouraged, I urge you to think about the history of this company. As some of you know, about 60 years ago, shortly after the end of World War II, Caterpillar decided to build its new offices somewhere other than East Peoria. But the people of this city had other ideas. They were hard at work rebuilding and modernizing, and they were determined to make East Peoria an ideal home for companies like Caterpillar. But Caterpillar's leaders were impressed, and ultimately, they changed their minds. They decided to go ahead and build offices right here in East Peoria to be, as a former chairman of the company put it, "no less willing to get in step with the march of progress."

Throughout the 20th century, this company has helped lead that march. From working far beyond capacity during World War II—even with 6,000 workers on military leave—to surviving the recession in the 1980s and emerging stronger and more competitive, to seizing the promise of today's green economy by leading the way with clean diesel engines, Caterpillar has shaped the American landscape, shown the world what a great American company looks like.

I know the past few months have been hard for this company. But they—I also know that they've been among the worst in a generation. But here's what else I know: Here in America, even in our darkest moments, we've held fast to a vision of a better future, and we've been

willing to work for it and struggle for it and sacrifice for it.

That's how it's going to be again. I have the fullest confidence that if we think boldly and we act quickly and fully devote ourselves to the work at hand, then out of this ordeal will come a better day and a brighter future for our children and our grandchildren. That's the history of this company. That's the history of this city. That's the history of this State. And that's the history that we're going to make, you and me together.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:20 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Dan Armstrong, former employee, Caterpillar, Inc.; former Rep. Robert H. Michel; Rep. Aaron Schock; and Illinois State Senator George P. Shadid and his wife Lorraine.

Statement on the Fourth Anniversary of the Death of Former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri of Lebanon
February 12, 2009

Saturday marks the fourth anniversary of the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. As we share our grief with the Lebanese people over the loss of Prime Minister Hariri, we also share our conviction that his sacrifice will not be in vain. The United States fully supports the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, whose work will begin in a few weeks to bring those responsible for this horrific crime and those that followed to justice.

As Lebanon prepares for Parliamentary elections, the United States will continue to support Lebanon's sovereignty and independence, the legitimate institutions of the Lebanese state, and the Lebanese people. The United States remains committed to the full implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolutions 1701 and 1559. We also will continue to support the voices of peace and moderation in Lebanon and hope that Lebanon continues down the path of national reconciliation, peace, and prosperity that its citizens so strongly deserve.

Remarks at the Abraham Lincoln Association Annual Banquet in Springfield, Illinois
February 12, 2009

Thank you very much. Well, it is wonderful to be back in Springfield, and I see so many familiar faces—to Mr. Hart; to Marilyn; to my Secretary of Transportation, Ray LaHood; to two of the finest Governors that we've had in the past, Jim Thompson and Jim Edgar; to Lura Lynn Ryan and to our new Governor, who's going to be doing outstanding work for us in the future, Pat Quinn; to Reverend McCants and to my dear friend Loretta Durbin.

I do feel guilty because Dick was the one who brought this event to my attention. [*Laughter*] I'm here, and he's there. [*Laughter*] But part of the reason that Dick Durbin has been such a great friend, not just to me, but to the people of Illinois, is because his work always comes first. And he has been unbelievable in providing leadership in the Senate through thick and through thin. And I'm very, very grateful to him. He is one of my greatest friends, and I would not be standing here if it were not for Dick Durbin. So please give Dick Durbin a big round of applause.

So it is wonderful to be back in Springfield, the city where I got my start in elective office, where I served for nearly a decade. I see some of my colleagues, your attorney general, Lisa Madigan, in the house. And you've got some constitutional officers there. I think that's Alexi, your treasurer, who's going to be playing

basketball with me at some point; Dan Hynes, comptroller, and just an incredible supporter during this past race; and your new senate president, John Cullerton, one of the sharpest legislators that we've ever had. Is the speaker around? He's over there? Mr. Speaker, it's good to see you. Thank you.

So I've got a lot of friends here. I've got to stop there, otherwise I'm going to be using up all my time.

I served here for nearly a decade and, as has already been mentioned, this is where I launched my candidacy for President 2 years ago this week, on the steps of the Old State Capitol where Abraham Lincoln served and prepared for the Presidency.

It was here, nearly 150 years ago, that the man whose life we are celebrating today, who you've been celebrating all week, bid farewell to this city that he had come to call his own. And as has already been mentioned, on a platform at a train station not far from where we're gathered, Lincoln turned to the crowd that had come to see him off and said, "To this place, and the kindness of these people, I owe everything." And being here tonight, surrounded by all of you, I share his sentiment. But looking out at this room full of so many who did so much for me, I'm also reminded of what Lincoln once said to a favor seeker who claimed it was his efforts that made the difference in the election. [*Laughter*] And Lincoln asked him, "So you think you made me President?" "Yes," the man replied, "under Providence, I think I did." "Well," said Lincoln, "it's a pretty mess you've got me into." [*Laughter*] "But I forgive you."

So whoever of you think you are responsible for this, we're taking names. [*Laughter*]

It's a humbling task, marking the bicentennial of our 16th President's birth, humbling for me in particular because it's fair to say that the Presidency of this singular figure who we celebrate in so many ways made my own story possible.

Here in Springfield, it's easier, though, to reflect on Lincoln the man rather than the marble giant, before Gettysburg, before Antietam, before Fredericksburg and Bull Run, before emancipation was proclaimed and the captives were set free. In 1854, Lincoln was simply a Springfield lawyer who'd served just a single term in Congress. Possibly in his law office, his feet on a cluttered desk, his sons playing around him, his clothes a bit too small to fit his uncommon frame, maybe wondering if somebody might call him up and ask him to be Commerce Secretary—[*laughter*]—he put some thoughts on paper, and for what purpose we do not know: "The legitimate object of government," he wrote, "is to do for the people what needs to be done, but which they cannot, by individual effort, do at all, or do so well, by themselves."

To do for the people what needs to be done but which they cannot do on their own. It's a simple statement, but it answers a central question of Abraham Lincoln's life. Why did he land on the side of union? What was it that made him so unrelenting in pursuit of victory that he was willing to test the Constitution he ultimately preserved? What was it that led this man to give his last full measure of devotion so that our Nation might endure?

And these are not easy questions to answer, and I cannot know if I'm right. But I suspect that his devotion to the idea of union came not from a belief that government always had the answer. It came not from a failure to understand our individual rights and responsibilities. This rugged rail-splitter, born in a log cabin of pioneer stock—who cleared a path through the woods as a boy, who lost a mother and a sister to the rigors of frontier life, who taught himself all that he knew, and everything that he had was because of his hard work—this man, our first Republican President, knew better than anybody what it meant to pull yourself up by your bootstraps. He understood that strain of personal liberty and self-reliance, that fierce independence at the heart of the American experience.

But he also understood something else. He recognized that while each of us must do our part—work as hard as we can, be as responsible as we can—although we are responsible for our own fates, in the end, there are certain things we cannot do on our own. There are certain things we can only do together. There are certain things only a union can do.

Only a union could harness the courage of our pioneers to settle the American West,

which is why Lincoln passed a Homestead Act giving a tract of land to anyone seeking a stake in our growing economy.

Only a union could foster the ingenuity of our framers—the ingenuity of our farmers, which is why he set up land-grant colleges that taught them how to make the most of their land while giving their children an education that let them dream the American Dream.

Only a union could speed our expansion and connect our coasts with a transcontinental railroad, and so, even in the midst of civil war, Lincoln built one. He fueled new enterprises with a national currency and spurred innovation and ignited America's imagination with a national academy of sciences, believing we must, as he put it, add "the fuel of interest to the fire of genius in the discovery . . . of new and useful things." And on this day that is also the bicentennial of Charles Darwin's birth, it's worth a moment to pause and renew that commitment to science and innovation and discovery that Lincoln understood so well.

Only a union could serve the hopes of every citizen to knock down the barriers to opportunity and give each and every person the chance to pursue the American Dream. Lincoln understood what Washington understood when he led farmers and craftsmen and shopkeepers to rise up against an empire; what Roosevelt understood when he lifted us from depression, built an arsenal of democracy, created the largest middle class in history with the GI bill. It's what Kennedy understood when he sent us to the Moon.

All these Presidents recognized that America is, and always has been, more than a band of 13 colonies or 50 states, more than a bunch of Yankees and Confederates, more than a collection of red States and blue States; but we are the United States. There isn't any dream beyond our reach—[*applause*]. There is no dream beyond our reach, any obstacle that can stand in our way when we recognize that our individual liberty is served, not negated, by a recognition of the common good. That is the spirit we are called to show once more.

The challenges we face are very different now: two wars; an economic crisis unlike any we've seen in our lifetime. Jobs have been lost; pensions are gone. Families' dreams have been endangered. Health care costs are exploding. Schools are falling short. We have an energy crisis that's hampering our economy and threatening our planet and enriching our adversaries.

And yet, while our challenges may be new, they did not come about overnight. Ultimately, they result from a failure to meet the test that Lincoln set. I understand there have been times in our history when our government has misjudged what we can do by individual effort alone, and what we can only do together; when we didn't draw the line as effectively as we should have; when government has done things that people can and should do for themselves.

Our welfare system, before reform, too often dampened individual initiative, discouraging people from taking responsibility for their own upward mobility. In education, sometimes we've lost sight of the role of parents, rather than government, in cultivating a thirst for knowledge and instilling those qualities of good character, hard work, and discipline and integrity that are so important to educational achievement and professional success.

But in recent years, we've seen the pendulum swing too far in the opposite direction. What's dominated is a philosophy that says every problem can be solved if only government would step out of the way. That if government were just dismantled and divvied up into tax breaks, that it would somehow benefit us all. Such knee-jerk disdain for government—this constant rejection of any common endeavor—cannot rebuild our levees or our roads or our bridges. It can't refurbish our schools or modernize our health care system. It can't lead to the next medical discovery or yield the research and technology that will spark a clean energy economy.

Only a nation can do those things. Only by coming together, all of us, in union, and expressing that sense of shared sacrifice and responsibility—for ourselves, yes, but also for one another—can we do the work that must be done in this country. That is part of the definition of being American.

It's only by rebuilding our economy and fostering the conditions of growth that willing workers can find a job and companies can find capital and the entrepreneurial spirit that is the key to our competitiveness can flourish. It's only by unleashing the potential of alternative fuels that will lower our energy bills and raise our industries' sights, make our Nation safer and our planet cleaner. It's only by remaking our schools for the 21st century that our children will get those good jobs so they can make of their lives what they will. It's only by coming together to do what people need done that we will, in Lincoln's words, "lift artificial weights from all shoulders [and give] an unfettered start, and a fair chance, in the race of life." That's all people are looking for, fair chance in the race of life.

That's what's required of us now and in the years ahead. We will be remembered for what we choose to make of this moment. And when posterity looks back on our time, as we are looking back on Lincoln's, I don't want it said that we saw an economic crisis but did not stem it; that we saw our schools decline and our bridges crumble but we did not rebuild them; that the world changed in the 21st century but America did not lead it; that we were consumed with small things, petty things when we were called to do great things. Instead, let them say that this generation—our generation—of Americans rose to the moment and gave America a new birth of freedom and opportunity in our time.

These are trying days and they will grow tougher in the months to come. And there will be moments when our doubts rise and our hopes recede. But let's always remember that we as a people have been here before. There were times when our revolution itself seemed altogether improbable, when the Union was all but lost, when fascism seemed set to prevail around the world. And yet, what earlier generations discovered—and what we must rediscover right now—is that it is precisely when we are in the deepest valley, when the climb is steepest, that Americans relearn how to take the mountaintop together, as one nation, as one people. As one nation, as one people: That's how we will beat back our present dangers. That is how we will surpass what trials may come. That's how we will do what Lincoln called on us all to do and "nobly save . . . the last best hope on Earth." That's what this is, the last best hope on Earth. Lincoln has passed that legacy onto us. It is now our responsibility to pass it on to the next generation.

Thank you, God bless you, and may God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:32 p.m. at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Richard E. Hart, president, Abraham Lincoln Association; Marilyn Kushak, chairwoman, Illinois Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission; former Govs. Jim Thompson and Jim Edgar of Illinois; Lura Lynn Ryan, wife of former Gov. George H. Ryan of Illinois; Rev. Gary McCants, presiding elder, Illinois Conference, Fourth Episcopal District, African Methodist Episcopal Church; Loretta S. Durbin, wife of Sen. Richard J. Durbin; and State Attorney General Lisa Madigan, State Treasurer Alexi Giannoulias, State Comptroller Daniel W. Hynes, State Senate President John Cullerton, and State Speaker of the House Michael J. Madigan of Illinois.

Remarks to the Business Council
February 13, 2009

Thank you. Please have a seat. Thank you. Well, thank you all for being here.

Before I begin, I want to say a brief word about the terrible tragedy that took place outside of Buffalo last night. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and friends who lost loved ones, and as always, our thanks go out to the brave first-responders who arrived immediately to try and save lives and who are still on the scene keeping people safe.

Tragic events such as these remind us of the fragility of life and the value of every single day. One person who understood that well was Beverly Eckert, who was on that flight and who I met with just a few days ago. You see, Beverly lost her husband on 9/11 and became a tireless

advocate for those families, whose lives were forever changed on that September day. And in keeping with that passionate commitment, she was on her way to Buffalo to mark what would have been her husband's birthday and launch a scholarship in his memory. So she was an inspiration to me and to so many others, and I pray that her family finds peace and comfort in the hard days ahead.

Welcome to the White House. Every President since Franklin Delano Roosevelt has sought the advice of the Business Council. Every President since Lyndon Johnson has sought your audience. And while this is a partnership that is important during periods of relative peace and prosperity, it is a essential partnership during tough economic times.

I don't need to tell you that we are in tough economic times. The challenges we face today we have not seen in a very long time. Each of you and every American sees them in very specific ways. We've lost 3.6 million jobs since this recession began, nearly 600,000 just last month. Many of your businesses are under tremendous pressure, with revenues falling and credit drying up. You're feeling directly or indirectly the reverberations of a financial crisis, which has upended the economy.

But I'm not here to repeat a litany of our challenges. We know what they are, we know they are vast, and we know that they are varied. Instead, I'm here to enlist your help, because we have a once-in-a-generation chance to act boldly and turn adversity into opportunity and to use this crisis as a chance to transform our economy for the 21st century.

That's the driving purpose of the recovery and reinvestment plan that I've put before Congress. It's a plan that will ignite spending by businesses and consumers, make the investments necessary for lasting economic growth and prosperity, and save or create more than 3.5 million jobs over the next 2 years. Ninety percent of those jobs are in the private sector.

And we've had a spirited debate about this plan over the last few weeks. Not everybody has shared the same view of how we should move forward, and at times, our discussions have been contentious. But that's a good thing, from my perspective. Diverse viewpoints are the lifeblood of a democracy, and debating these viewpoints is how we learn from each other's perspective and refine our approaches.

But as we meet, Congress is now poised to act. It's passed the House; it's passed the Senate. We expect a vote on the final version today. And one of the reasons we've come so far is because so many of you have recognized the urgency and necessity of taking action. This plan has won the support of groups such as the Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers, but also the AFL–CIO.

And the goal at the heart of this plan is to create jobs, not just any jobs, but jobs doing the work America needs done: repairing our infrastructure, modernizing our schools and our hospitals, promoting the clean, alternative energy sources that will help us finally declare our independence from foreign oil. It's a plan that will put people to work building wind turbines and solar panels and fuel-efficient cars.

We'll upgrade our schools, creating 21st-century classrooms and libraries and labs for millions of children across America. We'll computerize our health care system, at last, to save billions of dollars and countless lives as we reduce medical errors. We'll lay down broadband Internet lines to connect rural schools and small businesses, so they can compete with their counterparts anywhere in the world. And we will rebuild our crumbling roads and bridges and repair our dangerously deficient dams and levees, so we don't face another Katrina.

In addition to saving and creating jobs, we'll also ensure that folks who've lost jobs through no fault of their own can receive greater unemployment benefits and continue their health care coverage. It'll provide badly needed middle class tax relief, putting money in the pockets of workers and their families at a time when many of them are experiencing greater distress. It'll also provide sensible tax relief to businesses that are trying to make payroll and create jobs. And our focus is not only on large businesses, but also small businesses that are probably feeling the credit crunch most acutely.

Now, passing this plan is a critical step, but as important as it is, it's only the beginning of what I think all of you understand is going to be a long and difficult process of turning our economy around. To truly address this crisis, we will also need to address the crisis in our financial sector to get credit flowing again to families and businesses. And we need to confront the crisis in the housing sector that's been one of the sources of our economic challenges. I'll be discussing that extensively soon. We're going to need comprehensive financial reform in the way government relates to the financial markets in order to deal with the complex challenges of the 21st century, both as a way to restore trust and also ensure that a crisis like this can never happen again.

And finally, we have to approach our budget in a responsible way. It's my strong belief that we're going to have to invest in the short term to get our economy moving again, and that we would be foolish to ignore our current perils. But I also think that it's important for us to think in the midterm and long term. And over that midterm and long term, we're going to have to have fiscal discipline. We are not going to be able to perpetually finance the levels of debt that the Federal Government are incurring and carrying.

And that means investing in priorities like energy and health care and education that will grow our economy again. But it also means eliminating those programs that are wasteful and duplicative and that we simply cannot afford. We have to once again live within our means. We're going to have to make some tough decisions that many of you are already making in your companies but the Federal Government has not made with respect to our operations.

It will take all of these steps to not only lead to an economic recovery, but to lead to a long-term path to economic prosperity. And this work will not be easy. Our recovery will likely be measured in years and not months. All of us—government, business, labor, and citizens—will have responsibilities to meet. And I will be looking to all of you for your ideas and innovations, for your help not only crafting the policies of the 21st century, but crafting a Government for the 21st century that can be a partner with you. Your best practices should be our best practices.

And as we consider the work ahead, we'd all be well served to reflect on the significance of the partnership that we see here today: how it was forged and why it's been so fruitful.

Now, back in the spring of 1933, in the early days of a new administration, President Roosevelt's Commerce Secretary gathered in Washington the leaders of some of the Nation's largest corporations, many of which continue to be represented in this room. These executives, hailing from General Electric and General Motors and AT&T and DuPont and others, formed an advisory panel to assist in the crafting of New Deal policies that in the coming years would transform the American economy amidst brutal and unyielding Depression. And the work of these volunteers would inform the inception and implementation of the Securities and Exchange Act, the Banking Act, the Social Security Act, and other policies that have served us ever since.

That's how the Business Council was born. It was at a moment when economic turmoil threatened the foundations on which our society was painstakingly built, at a moment when other nations were giving up, as President Roosevelt said, "[selling] their heritage of freedom for the illusion of a living."

That's not what we did. We adapted. We changed. We boldly defended our system of free enterprise even as we enacted policies to transform the ways that it would function. We did not give in to ideologies that dismissed or derided the role of government, nor those that denied the role of the marketplace.

And so even as our President was leading unprecedented public interventions into the private sector, he did so in concert with the private sector's leaders. Even as Government built new regulatory structures and weaved a social safety net, these efforts were designed not to confine private industry, but to allow it once again to succeed while ensuring that success was broadly shared.

And President Roosevelt understood the new role of Government in this new world, that while extraordinary actions on its part might be

the source of recovery, no action on the part of Government, no matter how extraordinary, would alone be a source of our prosperity.

Now, conversely, these corporate citizens understood their new role as well: that we all had responsibilities to fulfill; that our survival depended on how well we worked together; that in a more interdependent economy, our fates—and were—were and are more interconnected.

Our growth, our success as a nation, depended on what we did together. And so the Government could lay the groundwork for an economy in which innovation is prized and hard work rewarded, in which rules are clear and clearly enforced. And the rest would be up to people like you and the people who work for you to create the incredible products and services that today we enjoy.

That's how we've led the global economy. That's how we've ushered in massive gains in wealth not just for the few, but for the many. That is how we've been—and will continue to be—a nation that draws on the talents of all our people, a place where generation after generation of bold thinkers and bright minds, innovators and inventors, have taken the chance to invest in an idea, to build a new product, to test a new theory, to do their small part to change our world. That's what's attracted some of the best talent around the world to our shores. That's our promise, and that's the promise that must always be at the heart of our partnership.

So I hope this is the beginning of many conversations. Many of you I know. Many of you I've had long conversations with in the past. My door will always be open to you. And I'm absolutely confident that if we're smart and if we are bold, if we work together, if we're willing to cast aside some of the theories that have already failed us and we remain open to new approaches and new ideas, and we think about the problems of our economy the way you think about your businesses—in practical, hard-headed, clear-eyed terms unclouded by dogmas—then I'm absolutely confident that we can lead our Nation through this transformative moment and come out stronger and more prosperous than ever before.

I thank you for your leadership. I thank you for being here. And I look forward to having a series of conversations with all of you in the near future. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:35 a.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Statement on the Crash of Continental Connection Flight 3407 in Clarence, New York
February 13, 2009

Michelle and I are deeply saddened to hear of the tragic accident outside of Buffalo last night. Our hearts go out to the families and friends who lost loved ones. I want to thank the brave first-responders who arrived immediately to try and save lives and who are continuing to ensure the safety of everyone in the area. We pray for all those who have been touched by this terrible tragedy to find peace and comfort in the hard days ahead.

The President's Weekly Address
February 14, 2009

This week, I spent some time with Americans across the country who are hurting because of this economic crisis: people closing the businesses they scrimped and saved to start; families losing the homes that were their stake in the American Dream; folks who've given up trying to get ahead and given in to the stark reality of just trying to get by. They've

been looking to those they sent to Washington for some hope at a time when they need it most.

This morning I'm pleased to say that after a lively debate full of healthy differences of opinion, we've delivered real and tangible progress for the American people.

Congress has passed my economic recovery plan, an ambitious plan at a time we badly need it. It will save or create more than 3.5 million jobs over the next 2 years, ignite spending by business and consumers alike, and lay a new foundation for our lasting economic growth and prosperity.

This is a major milestone on our road to recovery, and I want to thank the Members of Congress who came together in common purpose to make it happen. Because they did, I will sign this legislation into law shortly, and we'll begin making the immediate investments necessary to put people back to work doing the work America needs done: the work of modernizing our health care system, saving billions of dollars and countless lives, and upgrading classrooms, libraries, and labs in our children's schools across America; the work of building wind turbines and solar panels and the smart grid necessary to transport the clean energy they create and laying broadband Internet lines to connect rural homes, schools, and businesses to the information superhighway; the work of repairing our crumbling roads and bridges, and our dangerously deficient dams and levees. And we'll help folks who've lost their jobs through no fault of their own by providing the unemployment benefits they need and protecting the health care they count on.

Now, some fear we won't be able to effectively implement a plan of this size and scope, and I understand their skepticism. Washington hasn't set a very good example in recent years. And with so much on the line, it's time to begin doing things differently.

That's why our goal must be to spend these precious dollars with unprecedented accountability, responsibility, and transparency. I've tasked my Cabinet and staff to set up the kind of management, oversight, and disclosure that will help ensure that, and I will challenge State and local governments to do the same.

Once the plan is put into action, a new web site, recovery.gov, will allow any American to watch where the money goes and weigh in with comments and questions. And I encourage every American to do so. Ultimately, this is your money, and you deserve to know where it's going and how it's spent.

This historic step won't be the end of what we do to turn our economy around, but rather the beginning. The problems that led us into this crisis are deep and widespread, and our response must be equal to the task.

For our plan to succeed, we must stabilize, repair, and reform our banking system, and get credit flowing again to families and businesses. We must write and enforce new rules of the road, to stop unscrupulous speculators from undermining our economy ever again. We must stem the spread of foreclosures and do everything we can to help responsible homeowners stay in their homes.

And in the weeks ahead, I will submit a proposal for the Federal budget that will begin to restore the discipline these challenging times demand. Our debt has doubled over the past 8 years, and we've inherited a trillion dollar deficit, which we must add to in the short term in order to jump-start our sick economy. But our long-term economic growth demands that we tame our burgeoning Federal deficit; that we invest in the things we need and dispense with the things we don't. This is a challenging agenda, but one we can and will achieve.

This morning I'm reminded of words President Kennedy spoke in another time of uncertainty: "Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers. Pray for powers equal to your tasks."

America, we will prove equal to this task. It will take time, and it will take effort, but working together, we will turn this crisis into opportunity and emerge from our painful present into a brighter future. After a week spent with the fundamentally decent men and women of this Nation, I have never been more certain of that.

Thank you.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 11:30 a.m. in the Map Room at the

White House on February 13 for broadcast on February 14. In his address, the President referred to H.R. 1, the "American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009." The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 13 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 14.

Remarks on Signing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 in Denver, Colorado
February 17, 2009

Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat. You guys can sit down too. [*Laughter*]

Let me begin by saying thank you to a few people: First of all, your outstanding Governor, Bill Ritter, please give Bill a big round of applause; Lieutenant Governor Barbara O'Brien; Secretary of State Bernie Buescher; your outstanding mayor, John Hickenlooper; your new Senator, Michael Bennet; your old Senator, now my Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar. Mark Udall is not here, but give him a round of applause anyway.

One of the outstanding leaders who helped shepherd this process through in record time—please give Max Baucus of Montana a big round of applause. Thank you, Max. To Secretary Federico Pena, one of my national cochairs—I would not be here if it were not for Federico. Thank you. To Representative Diana DeGette, who is a—we are in her district, so thank you so much; Representative Betsy Markey; Representative Jared Polis; Representative Ed Perlmutter; to all the other elected officials and outstanding leaders who are here; and to the whole Namaste family and Mr. Jones for outstanding work, congratulations. Give them a big round of applause. And to the best Vice President that we've had in a long time, Joe Biden.

It is great to be back in Denver. I was here last summer—we had a good time—[*laughter*]—to accept the nomination of my party and to make a promise to people of all parties that I would do all that I could to give every American the chance to make of their lives what they will; to see their children climb higher than they did. And I'm back today to say that we have begun the difficult work of keeping that promise. We have begun the essential work of keeping the American Dream alive in our time. And that's why we're here today.

Now, I don't want to pretend that today marks the end of our economic problems, nor does it constitute all of what we're going to have to do to turn our economy around. But today does mark the beginning of the end: the beginning of what we need to do to create jobs for Americans scrambling in the wake of layoffs; the beginning of what we need to do to provide relief for families worried that they won't be able to pay next month's bills; the beginning of the first steps to set our economy on a firmer foundation, paving the way to long-term growth and prosperity.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that I will sign today, a plan that meets the principles I laid out in January, is the most sweeping economic recovery package in our history. It's the product of broad consultation and the recipient of broad support, from business leaders, unions, public interest groups, from the Chamber of Commerce, and the National Association of Manufacturers, as well as the AFL–CIO; from Democrats and Republicans, mayors as well as Governors. It's a rare thing in Washington for people with such diverse and different viewpoints to come together and support the same bill. And on behalf of our Nation, I want to thank all of them for it, including your two outstanding Senators, Michael Bennet and Mark Udall, as well as all the members of your congressional delegation. They did an outstanding job, and they deserve a big round of applause.

I also want to thank Joe Biden for working behind the scenes from the very start to make this recovery act possible. I want to thank Speaker Pelosi and Harry Reid for acting so

quickly and for proving that Congress could step up to this challenge.

I have special thanks to Max Baucus, who's the Chairman of the Finance Committee. Without Max, none of this would have happened. He had to work overtime, and push his committee to work overtime. And I want to thank all the committee chairs and Members of Congress for coming up with a plan that is both bold and balanced enough to meet the demands of this moment. The American people were looking to them for leadership, and that's what they provided.

Now, what makes this recovery plan so important is not just that it will create or save 3½ million jobs over the next 2 years, including 60,000-plus here in Colorado. It's that we're putting Americans to work doing the work that America needs done—[*applause*]—in critical areas that have been neglected for too long; work that will bring real and lasting change for generations to come.

Because we know we can't build our economic future on the transportation and information networks of the past, we are remaking the American landscape with the largest new investment in our Nation's infrastructure since Eisenhower built an Interstate Highway System in the 1950s. Because of this investment, nearly 400,000 men and women will go to work rebuilding our crumbling roads and bridges, repairing our faulty dams and levees, bringing critical broadband connections to businesses and homes in nearly every community in America, upgrading mass transit, building high-speed rail lines that will improve travel and commerce throughout our Nation.

Because we know America can't outcompete the world tomorrow if our children are being out-educated today, we're making the largest investment in education in our Nation's history. It's an investment that will create jobs building 21st century classrooms and libraries and labs for millions of children across America. It will provide funds to train a new generation of math and science teachers, while giving aid to States and school districts to stop teachers from being laid off and education programs from being cut.

In a place like New York City, 14,000 teachers who were set to be let go may now be able to continue pursuing their critical mission. It's an investment that will create a new $2,500 annual tax credit to put the dream of a college degree within reach for middle class families and make college affordable for 7 million students, helping more of our sons and daughters aim higher, reach further, fulfill their God-given potential.

Because we know that spiraling health care costs are crushing families and businesses alike, we're taking the most meaningful steps in years towards modernizing our health care system. It's an investment that will take the long overdue step of computerizing America's medical records to reduce the duplication and waste that costs billions of health care dollars, and medical errors that cost thousands of lives each year.

Further, thanks to the actions we've taken, 7 million Americans who lost their health care along the way will continue to get the coverage they need, and roughly 20 million more Americans can breathe a little easier knowing that their health care won't be cut due to a State budget shortfall. And a historic commitment to wellness initiatives will keep millions of Americans from setting foot in the doctor's office in the first place, because these are preventable diseases, and we're going to invest in prevention.

So taken together with the enactment earlier this month of a long-delayed law to extend health care to millions more children of working families, we have done more in 30 days to advance the cause of health care reform than this country has done in an entire decade. And that's something we should be proud of.

Because we know we can't power America's future on energy that's controlled by foreign dictators, we are taking big steps down the road to energy independence, laying the groundwork for new green energy economies that can create countless well-paying jobs. It's an investment that will double the amount of renewable energy produced over the next 3 years. Think about that: double the amount of renewable energy in 3 years; provide tax credits and loan guarantees to companies like Namaste, a company that will be expanding, instead of laying people off, as a result of the plan that I'm about to sign.

And in the process, we will transform the way we use energy. Today, the electricity we use is carried along a grid of lines and wires that date back to Thomas Edison, a grid that can't support the demands of this economy. This means we're using 19th and 20th century technologies to battle 21st century problems like climate change and energy security. It also means that places like North Dakota can—that can produce a lot of wind energy can't deliver it to communities that want it, leading to a gap between how much clean energy we are using and how much we could be using.

The investment we're making today will create a newer, smarter electric grid that will allow for broader use of alternative energy. We will build on the work that's being done in places like Boulder, a community that's on its—that's on pace to be the world's first smart grid city. This investment will place smart meters in homes to make our energy bills lower, make outages less likely, and make it easier to use clean energy. It's an investment that will save taxpayers over $1 billion by slashing energy costs in our Federal buildings by 25 percent; save working families hundreds of dollars a year on their energy bills by weatherizing over 1 million homes. And it's an investment that takes the important first step towards a national transmission superhighway that will connect our cities to the windy plains of the Dakotas and the sunny deserts of the Southwest.

Even beyond energy, from the National Institutes of Health to the National Science Foundation, this recovery act represents the biggest increase in basic research funding in the long history of America's noble endeavor to better understand our world. And just as President Kennedy sparked an explosion of innovation when he set America's sights on the Moon, I hope this investment will ignite our imagination once more, spurring new discoveries and breakthroughs in science, in medicine, in energy, to make our economy stronger and our Nation more secure and our planet safer for our children.

Now, while this package is composed mostly of critical investments, it also includes aid to State and local governments to prevent layoffs of firefighters or police recruits in—[*applause*]—recruits like the ones in Columbus, Ohio, who were told that instead of being sworn in as officers, they were about to be let go. It includes help for those hardest hit by our economic crisis like the nearly 18 million Americans who will get larger unemployment checks in the mail. About a third of this package comes in the forms of tax cuts—by the way, the most progressive in our history, not only spurring job creation, but putting money in the pockets of 95 percent of hardworking families in America. So unlike the tax cuts that we've seen in recent years, the vast majority of these tax benefits will go not to the wealthiest Americans, but to the middle class, with those workers who make the least benefiting the most.

And it's a plan that rewards responsibility, lifting 2 million Americans from poverty by ensuring that anyone who works hard does not have to raise a child below the poverty line. So as a whole, this plan will help poor and working Americans pull themselves into the middle class in a way we haven't seen in nearly 50 years.

What I'm signing, then, is a balanced plan with a mix of tax cuts and investments. It's a plan that's been put together without earmarks or the usual pork barrel spending. It's a plan that will be implemented with an unprecedented level of transparency and accountability.

With a recovery package of this size comes a responsibility to assure every taxpayer that we are being careful with the money they work so hard to earn. And that's why I'm assigning a team of managers to ensure that the precious dollars we've invested are being spent wisely and well. We will—[*applause*]. Governor Ritter, Mayor Hickenlooper, we're going to hold Governors and local officials who receive the money to the same high standard. And we expect you, the American people, to hold us accountable for the results. And that's why we've created recovery.gov, a web site so that every American can go online and see how this money is being spent and what kind of jobs is being created, where those jobs are being created.

We want transparency and accountability throughout this process.

Now, as important as the step we take today is, this legislation represents only the first part of the broad strategy we need to address our economic crisis. In the coming days and weeks, I'll be launching other aspects of the plan. We will need to stabilize, repair, and reform our banking system, and get credit flowing again to families and businesses. We will need to end the culture where we ignore problems until they become full-blown crises instead of recognizing that the only way to build a thriving economy is to set and enforce firm rules of the road.

We must stem the spread of foreclosures and falling home values for all Americans and do everything we can to help responsible homeowners stay in their homes, something I'll talk more about tomorrow. And we will need to do everything in the short term to get our economy moving again, while at the same time recognizing that we have inherited a trillion-dollar deficit, and we need to begin restoring fiscal discipline and taming our exploding deficits over the long term.

None of this will be easy. The road to recovery will not be straight. We will make progress and there may be some slippage along the way. It will demand courage and discipline. It will demand a new sense of responsibility that's been missing from Wall Street all the way to Washington. There will be hazards and reverses. But I have every confidence that if we are willing to continue doing the critical work that must be done—by each of us, by all of us—then we will leave this struggling economy behind us, and come out on the other side, more prosperous as a people.

For our American story is not—and never has been—about things coming easy. It's about rising to the moment when the moment is hard, and converting crisis into opportunity, and seeing to it that we emerge from whatever trials we face stronger than we were before. It's about rejecting the notion that our fate is somehow written for us, and instead laying claim to a destiny of our own making. That's what earlier generations of Americans have done, that's what we owe our children, that's what we are doing today.

Thank you, Colorado. Let's get to work. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:50 p.m. at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science. In his remarks, he referred to Sens. Michael F. Bennet and Mark Udall; Reps. Betsy Markey and Jared Polis; former Secretary of Energy Federico Pena; and Blake Jones, president, Namaste Solar Electric, Inc., who introduced the President. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden. H.R. 1, approved February 17, was assigned Public Law No. 111–5.

Statement on Signing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009
February 17, 2009

Today I have signed into law H.R. 1, the "American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009." The Act provides a direct fiscal boost to help lift our Nation from the greatest economic crisis in our lifetimes and lay the foundation for further growth. This recovery plan will help to save or create as many as three to four million jobs by the end of 2010, the vast majority of them in the private sector. It will make the most significant investment in America's roads, bridges, mass transit, and other infrastructure since the construction of the Interstate Highway System. It will make investments to foster reform in education, double renewable energy while fostering efficiency in the use of our energy, and improve quality while bringing down costs in healthcare. Middle class families will get tax cuts and the most vulnerable will get the largest increase in assistance in decades.

The situation we face could not be more serious. We have inherited an economic crisis as deep and as dire as any since the Great Depression. Economists from across the spectrum have warned that failure to act quickly would lead to the disappearance of millions of more jobs and national unemployment rates that

could be in the double digits. I want to thank the Congress for coming together around this hard-fought compromise. No one policy or program will solve the challenges we face right now, nor will this crisis recede in a short period of time. However, with this Act we begin the process of restoring the economy and making America a stronger and more prosperous nation.

My Administration will initiate new, far-reaching measures to help ensure that every dollar spent in this historic legislation is spent wisely and for its intended purpose. The Federal Government will be held to new standards of transparency and accountability. The legislation includes no earmarks. An oversight board will be charged with monitoring our progress as part of an unprecedented effort to root out waste and inefficiency. This board will be advised by experts—not just Government experts, not just politicians, but also citizens with years of expertise in management, economics, and accounting.

So much depends on what we do at this moment. This is not about the future of my Administration. This effort is about the future of our families and communities, our economy and our country. We are going to move forward carefully and transparently and as effectively as possible because so much is on the line. That is what we have already begun to do—drafting this plan with a level of openness for which the American people have asked and that this situation demands.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
February 17, 2009.

NOTE: H.R. 1, approved February 17, was assigned Public Law No. 111–5.

Statement on United States Troop Levels in Afghanistan
February 17, 2009

There is no more solemn duty as President than the decision to deploy our Armed Forces into harm's way. I do it today mindful that the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan demands urgent attention and swift action. The Taliban is resurgent in Afghanistan, and Al Qaida supports the insurgency and threatens America from its safe haven along the Pakistani border.

To meet urgent security needs, I approved a request from Secretary Gates to deploy a Marine expeditionary brigade later this spring and an Army Stryker brigade and the enabling forces necessary to support them later this summer. This increase has been requested by General McKiernan and supported by Secretary Gates, the Joint Chiefs and the Commander of Central Command. General McKiernan's request for these troops is months old, and the fact that we are going to responsibly draw down our forces in Iraq allows us the flexibility to increase our presence in Afghanistan.

This reinforcement will contribute to the security of the Afghan people and to stability in Afghanistan. I recognize the extraordinary strain that this deployment places on our troops and military families. I honor their service and will give them the support they need.

This increase is necessary to stabilize a deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, which has not received the strategic attention, direction, and resources it urgently requires. That is why I ordered a review of our policy upon taking office, so we have a comprehensive strategy and the necessary resources to meet clear and achievable objectives in Afghanistan and the region.

This troop increase does not predetermine the outcome of that strategic review. Instead, it will further enable our team to put together a comprehensive strategy that will employ all

elements of our national power to fulfill achievable goals in Afghanistan. As we develop our new strategic goals, we will do so in concert with our friends and allies as together we seek the resources necessary to succeed.

NOTE: The statement referred to Gen. David D. McKiernan, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan; and Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commander, U.S. Central Command.

Interview With Peter Mansbridge of Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
February 17, 2009

Trade

Mr. Mansbridge. Mr. President, thank you for doing this. Canadians are very excited about your trip.

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Mansbridge. When they watch you today sign your recovery bill into law, how concerned should they be that the "Buy America" clause is still there, even though you've given assurances international trade agreements will be respected. How concerned should they be?

The President. I don't think they should be too concerned. You know, I think that if you look at history, one of the most important things during a worldwide recession of the sort that we're seeing now is that each country does not resort to "beggar thy neighbor" policies, protectionist policies. They can end up further contracting world trade. And my administration is committed to making sure that even as we take steps to strengthen the U.S. economy that we are doing so in a way that actually over time will enhance the ability of trading partners, like Canada, to work within our boundaries.

And my expectation is, is that where you have strong U.S. competitors who can sell products and services, that a lot of Governors and mayors are going to want to try to find U.S. equipment or services, but that we are going to abide by our World Trade Organization and NAFTA obligations just as we always have.

North America Free Trade Agreement

Mr. Mansbridge. You mentioned NAFTA. A year ago you were pretty critical of NAFTA. In fact, you even suggested at one point that the U.S. opt out if it couldn't renegotiate. Do you think that's the time now to be making that case, or is it something that's set aside now?

The President. As I said, I think there are a lot of sensitivities right now because of the huge decline in world trade. As I've said before, NAFTA, the basic framework of the agreement has environmental and labor protections as side agreements. My argument has always been that we might as well incorporate them into the full agreement so that they're fully enforceable.

But what I've also said is that Canada is one of our most important trading partners. We rely on them heavily. There's $1.5 billion worth of trade going back and forth every day between the two countries, and that it is not in anybody's interests to see that trade diminish.

Mr. Mansbridge. Especially now.

The President. Absolutely.

Energy

Mr. Mansbridge. Part of that trade involves the energy sector; a lot of oil and gas comes to the United States from Canada and even more in the future with oil sands development. Now, there are some in your country—and Canada as well—who feel the oil sands is dirty oil because of the extraction process. What do you think? Is it dirty oil?

The President. Well, it—what we know is that oil sands create a big—creates a big carbon footprint. And so the dilemma that Canada faces, the United States faces, and China and the entire world faces is how do we obtain the energy that we need to grow our economies in a way that is not rapidly accelerating climate change. And that's one of the reasons why the stimulus bill that I'll be signing today contains billions of dollars towards clean energy development.

I think to the extent that Canada and the United States can collaborate on ways that we can sequester carbon, capture greenhouse gases before they're emitted into the atmosphere,

that's going to be good for everybody. Because if we don't, then we're going to have a ceiling at some point in terms of our ability to expand our economies and maintain the standard of living that's so important, particularly when you've got countries like China and India that are obviously interested in catching up.

Alternative Fuel Sources

Mr. Mansbridge. So are you drawing a link, then, in terms of the future of tar sands oil coming into the U.S. contingent on a sense of a continental environment policy on cap and trade?

The President. Well, I think what I'm suggesting is, is that no country in isolation is going to be able to solve this problem. So Canada, the United States, China, India, the European Union, all of us are going to have to work together in an effective way to figure out how do we balance the imperatives of economic growth with very real concerns about the effect we're having on our planet. And ultimately, I think this can be solved by technology.

I think that it is possible for us to create a set of clean energy mechanisms that allow us to use things not just like oil sands, but also coal. The United States is the Saudi Arabia of coal, but we have our own homegrown problems in terms of dealing with a cheap energy source that creates a big carbon footprint.

And so we're not going to be able to deal with any of these issues in isolation. The more that we can develop technologies that tap alternative sources of energy but also contain the environmental damage of fossil fuels, the better off we're going to be.

Environment

Mr. Mansbridge. I know you're looking at it as a global situation, in terms of global partners, but there are some who do argue that this is the time; if there was ever going to be a continental energy policy and a continental environmental policy, this would be it. Would you agree with that thinking?

The President. Well, you know, I think one of the promising areas for—not just for bilateral but also trilateral cooperation is around this issue. I met with President Calderon here in the United States, and Mexico actually has taken some of the boldest steps around the issues of alternative energy and carbon reductions of any country out there. And it's very rare for a country that's still involved in developing and trying to raise its standard of living to stay as focused on this issue as President Calderon's administration has.

What I think that offers is the possibility of a template that we can create between Canada, the United States, and Mexico that is moving forcefully around these issues. But as I said, it's going to be important for us to make sure that countries like China and India, with enormous populations and huge energy needs, that they are brought into this process as well.

Canada's Role in Afghanistan/Military Operations in Afghanistan

Mr. Mansbridge. Afghanistan. As you know, Canada has been there from the beginning, since the fall of 2001 and has suffered extreme casualties in its combat missions there. And the Canadian Parliament has decided, out of combat by the year 2011. When you go to Ottawa, will you have any suggestions to Canada that it should reconsider what its role in Afghanistan is?

The President. Well, first of all, I think the Canadian contribution has been extraordinary, and for all the families who have borne the burden in Canada, I think we all have a heartfelt thanks.

I'm in the process of a strategic review of our approach in Afghanistan. Very soon we will be releasing some initial plans in terms of how we are going to approach the military side of the equation in Afghanistan. But I am absolutely convinced that you cannot solve the problem of Afghanistan, the Taliban, the spread of extremism in that region solely through military means. We're going to have to use diplomacy; we're going to have to use development. And my hope is that in conversations that I have with Prime Minister Harper, that he and I end up seeing the importance of a comprehensive strategy and one that ultimately the people of Canada can support, as well as the people of the United States can

support, because obviously, here as well, there are a lot of concerns about a conflict that has lasted quite a long time now and actually appears to be deteriorating at this point.

Mr. Mansbridge. But are you saying that you will or you won't ask Canada to remain in a combat role?

The President. Well, I think, you know, we've got until 2011, according to the Canadian Legislature, and I think it's important for the Canadian Legislature and the people of Canada to get a sense that what they're doing is productive. So what I will be communicating is the approach that we intend to take. Obviously, I'm going to be continuing to ask other countries to help think through how do we approach this very difficult problem. But I don't have a specific "ask" in my pocket that I intend to bring out in our meetings.

Mr. Mansbridge. Is Afghanistan still winnable?

The President. Well, I think Afghanistan is still winnable in the sense of our ability to ensure that it is not a launching pad for attacks against North America. I think it's still possible for us to stamp out Al Qaida to make sure that extremism is not expanding but rather is contracting. I think all those goals are still possible, but I think that as a consequence of the war on Iraq, we took our eye off the ball. We have not been as focused as we need to be on all the various steps that are needed in order to deal with Afghanistan.

If you've got narcotrafficking that is funding the Taliban, if there is a perception that there's no rule of law in Afghanistan, if we don't solve the issue of the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, then we're probably not going to solve the problem.

Canada

Mr. Mansbridge. I'm down to my last minute, a couple of quickies on Canada, your sense of the country. I mean, I think, as you may know, you carry Canada on your belt. [*Laughter*] That BlackBerry is a Canadian invention.

The President. Absolutely.

Mr. Mansbridge. You've been to Canada once. What's your sense of the country?

The President. Well, yes, I've been to Canada a couple of times. Most recently, it was to visit my brother-in-law's family who was from Burlington right outside of Toronto. Look, I think that Canada is one of the most impressive countries in the world, the way it has managed a diverse population, a vibrant economy. You know, the natural beauty of Canada is extraordinary. Obviously, there is enormous kinship between the United States and Canada, and the ties that bind our two countries together are things that are very important to us.

And, you know, one of the things that I think has been striking about Canada is that in the midst of this enormous economic crisis, I think Canada has shown itself to be a pretty good manager of the financial system in the economy in ways that we haven't always been here in the United States. And I think that's important for us to take note of, that it's possible for us to have a vibrant banking sector, for example, without taking some of the wild risks that have resulted in so much trouble on Wall Street.

Mr. Mansbridge. Appreciate this very much. You still haven't seen your first hockey game.

The President. I'm looking forward to making it happen at some point.

Mr. Mansbridge. Mr. President, thank you very much.

The President. Thank you so much. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The interview began taping at 9:23 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 17 but was embargoed for release until 9 p.m. In his remarks, the President referred to President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico; Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada; and his brother-in-law Konrad Ng.

Remarks at Dodson High School in Mesa, Arizona
February 18, 2009

Thank you very much. Please, everybody have a seat. Thank you. Well, it is good to be back in Arizona. Thank you. Are you excited? Thank you, thank you. And thank you for arranging for such a beautiful day. I want to stick around, but I got to go back to work. But it is wonderful to be here. And to all of you, I know that attending these kinds of events, oftentimes you have to wait in line, and there's all kinds of stuff going on, but I appreciate you being here very much. And to all the officials here at the school, the principal and the student body, everybody who helped make this possible, thank you so much to all of you.

I'm here today to talk about a crisis unlike we've ever known, but one that you know very well here in Mesa and throughout the valley. In Phoenix and its surrounding suburbs, the American Dream is being tested by a home mortgage crisis that not only threatens the stability of our economy, but also the stability of families and neighborhoods. It's a crisis that strikes at the heart of the middle class: the homes in which we invest our savings and build our lives, raise our families and plant roots in our communities.

So many Americans have shared with me their personal experiences of this crisis. Many have written letters or emails or shared their stories with me at rallies and along rope lines. Their hardship and heartbreak are a reminder that while this crisis is vast, it begins just one house and one family at a time.

It begins with a young family—maybe in Mesa or Glendale or Tempe—or just as likely in a suburban area of Las Vegas or Cleveland or Miami. They save up, they search, they choose a home that feels like the perfect place to start a life. They secure a fixed-rate mortgage at a reasonable rate, and they make a downpayment, and they make their mortgage payments each month. They are as responsible as anyone could ask them to be.

But then they learn that acting responsibly often isn't enough to escape this crisis. Perhaps somebody loses a job in the latest round of layoffs, one of more than 3.5 million jobs lost since this recession began. Or maybe a child gets sick, or a spouse has his or her hours cut.

In the past, if you found yourself in a situation like this, you could have sold your home and bought a smaller one with more affordable payments, or you could have refinanced your home at a lower rate. But today, home values have fallen so sharply that even if you make a large downpayment, the current value of your mortgage may still be higher than the current value of your house. So no bank will return your calls, and no sale will return your investment.

You can't afford to leave; you can't afford to stay. So you start cutting back on luxuries. Then you start cutting back on necessities. You spend down your savings to keep up with your payments. Then you open the retirement fund. Then you use the credit cards. And when you've gone through everything you have and done everything you can, you have no choice but to default on your loan. And so your home joins the nearly 6 million others in foreclosure or at risk of foreclosure across the country, including roughly 150,000 right here in Arizona.

But the foreclosures which are uprooting families and upending lives across America are only part of the housing crisis. For while there are millions of families who face foreclosure, there are millions more who are in no danger of losing their homes, but who have still seen their dreams endangered. They're the families who see the "For Sale" signs lining the streets, who see neighbors leave, and homes standing vacant, and lawns slowly turning brown. They see their own homes, their single largest asset, plummeting in value. One study in Chicago found that a foreclosed home reduces the price of nearby homes by as much as 9 percent. Home prices in cities across the country have fallen by more than 25 percent since 2006. And in Phoenix, they've fallen by 43 percent.

And even if your neighborhood hasn't been hit by foreclosures, you're likely feeling the effects of this crisis in other ways. Companies in

your community that depend on the housing market—construction companies and home furnishing stores and painters and landscapers—they're all cutting back and laying people off. The number of residential construction jobs has fallen by more than a quarter million since mid-2006. As businesses lose revenue and people lose income, the tax base shrinks, which means less money for schools and police and fire departments. And on top of this, the costs to local government associated with a single foreclosure can be as high as $20,000.

So the effects of this crisis have also reverberated across the financial markets. When the housing markets collapsed, so did the availability of credit on which our economy depends. And as that credit has dried up, it's been harder for families to find affordable loans to purchase a car or pay tuition, and harder for businesses to secure the capital they need to expand and create jobs.

In the end, all of us are paying a price for this home mortgage crisis. And all of us will pay an even steeper price if we allow this crisis to continue to deepen, a crisis which is unraveling home ownership, the middle class, and the American Dream itself. But if we act boldly and swiftly to arrest this downward spiral, then every American will benefit. And that's what I want to talk about today.

The plan I'm announcing focuses on rescuing families who have played by the rules and acted responsibly, by refinancing loans for millions of families in traditional mortgages who are underwater or close to it, by modifying loans for families stuck in subprime mortgages they can't afford as a result of skyrocketing interest rates or personal misfortune, and by taking broader steps to keep mortgage rates low so that families can secure loans with affordable monthly payments.

At the same time, this plan must be viewed in a larger context. A lost home often begins with a lost job. Many businesses have laid off workers for a lack of revenue and available capital. Credit has become scarce as markets have been overwhelmed by the collapse of securities backed by failing mortgages. In the end, the home mortgage crisis, the financial crisis, and this broader economic crisis are all interconnected, and we can't successfully address any one of them without addressing them all.

So yesterday in Denver, I signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which will create or save—[*applause*]. The act will create or save 3½ million jobs over the next 2 years, including 70,000 right here in Arizona, right here doing the work America needs done. And we're also going to work to stabilize, repair, and reform our financial system to get credit flowing again to families and businesses.

And we will pursue the housing plan I'm outlining today. And through this plan, we will help between 7 and 9 million families restructure or refinance their mortgages so they can afford—avoid foreclosure. And we're not just helping homeowners at risk of falling over the edge, we're preventing their neighbors from being pulled over that edge too, as defaults and foreclosures contribute to sinking home values, and failing local businesses, and lost jobs.

But I want to be very clear about what this plan will not do: it will not rescue the unscrupulous or irresponsible by throwing good taxpayer money after bad loans; it will not help speculators who took risky bets on a rising market and bought homes not to live in but to sell; it will not help dishonest lenders who acted irresponsibly, distorting the facts and dismissing the fine print at the expense of buyers who didn't know better; and it will not reward folks who bought homes they knew from the beginning they would never be able to afford. So I just want to make this clear: This plan will not save every home.

But it will give millions of families resigned to financial ruin a chance to rebuild. It will prevent the worst consequences of this crisis from wreaking even greater havoc on the economy. And by bringing down the foreclosure rate, it will help to shore up housing prices for everybody. According to estimates by the Treasury Department, this plan could stop the slide in home prices due to neighboring foreclosures by up to $6,000 per home.

So here's how my plan works: First, we will make it possible for an estimated 4 to 5 million currently ineligible homeowners who receive their mortgages through Fannie Mae or

Freddie Mac to refinance their mortgages at a lower rate.

Today, as a result of declining home values, millions of families are what's called "underwater," which simply means that they owe more on their mortgages than their homes are currently worth. These families are unable to sell their homes, but they're also unable to refinance them. So in the event of a job loss or another emergency, their options are limited.

Also right now, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the institutions that guarantee home loans for millions of middle class families, are generally not permitted to guarantee refinancing for mortgages valued at more than 80 percent of the home's worth. So families who are underwater or close to being underwater can't turn to these lending institutions for help.

My plan changes that by removing this restriction on Fannie and Freddie so that they can refinance mortgages they already own or guarantee.

And what this will do is it will allow millions of families stuck with loans at a higher rate to refinance. And the estimated cost to taxpayers would be roughly zero. While Fannie and Freddie would receive less money in payments, this would be balanced out by a reduction in defaults and foreclosures.

I also want to point out that millions of other households could benefit from historically low interest rates if they refinance, though many don't know that this opportunity is available to them—meaning some of you—an opportunity that could save your families hundreds of dollars each month. And the efforts we are taking to stabilize mortgage markets will help you borrowers secure more affordable terms too.

A second thing we're going to do under this plan is we will create new incentives so that lenders work with borrowers to modify the terms of subprime loans at risk of default and foreclosure.

Subprime loans, loans with high rates and complex terms that often conceal their costs, make up only 12 percent of all mortgages but account for roughly half of all foreclosures. Right now, when families with these mortgages seek to modify a loan to avoid this fate, they often find themselves navigating a maze of rules and regulations, but they're rarely finding answers. Some subprime lenders are willing to renegotiate, but many aren't. And your ability to restructure your loan depends on where you live, the company that owns or manages your loan, or even the agent who happens to answer the phone on the day that you call.

So here's what my plan does: establishes clear guidelines for the entire mortgage industry that will encourage lenders to modify mortgages on primary residences. Any institution that wishes to receive financial assistance from the Government, from taxpayers, and to modify home mortgages, will have to do so according to these guidelines, which will be in place 2 weeks from today.

Here's what this means: If lenders and homebuyers work together, and the lender agrees to offer rates that the borrower can afford, then we'll make up part of the gap between what the old payments were and what the new payments will be. Under this plan, lenders who participate will be required to reduce those payments to no more than 31 percent of a borrower's income. And this will enable as many as 3 to 4 million homeowners to modify the terms of their mortgages to avoid foreclosure.

So this part of the plan will require both buyers and lenders to step up and do their part, to take on some responsibility. Lenders will need to lower interest rates and share in the costs of reducing monthly payments in order to prevent another wave of foreclosures. Borrowers will be required to make payments on time in return for this opportunity to reduce those payments.

And I also want to be clear that there will be a cost associated with this plan. But by making these investments in foreclosure prevention today, we will save ourselves the costs of foreclosure tomorrow, costs that are borne not just by families with troubled loans, but by their neighbors and communities and by our economy as a whole. Given the magnitude of these crises, it is a price well worth paying.

There's a third part of the plan: We will take major steps to keep mortgage rates low for

millions of middle class families looking to secure new mortgages.

Today, most new home loans are backed by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which guarantee loans and set standards to keep mortgage rates low and to keep mortgage financing available and predictable for middle class families. Now, this function is profoundly important, especially now as we grapple with a crisis that would only worsen if we were to allow further disruptions in our mortgage markets.

Therefore, using the funds already approved by Congress for this purpose, the Treasury Department and the Federal Reserve will continue to purchase Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac mortgage-backed securities so that there is stability and liquidity in the marketplace. Through its existing authority, Treasury will provide up to $200 billion in capital to ensure that Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac can continue to stabilize markets and hold mortgage rates down.

And we're also going to work with Fannie and Freddie on other strategies to bolster the mortgage markets, like working with State housing financing agencies to increase their liquidity. And as we seek to ensure that these institutions continue to perform what is a vital function on behalf of middle class families, we also need to maintain transparency and strong oversight so that they do so in responsible and effective ways.

Fourth, we will pursue a wide range of reforms designed to help families stay in their homes and avoid foreclosures.

And my administration will continue to support reforming our bankruptcy rules so that we allow judges to reduce home mortgages on primary residences to their fair market value, as long as borrowers pay their debts under court-ordered plans. I just want everybody to understand, that's the rule for investors who own two, three, and four homes. So it should be the rule for folks who just own one home as an alternative to foreclosure.

In addition, as part of the recovery plan I signed into law yesterday, we are going to award $2 billion in competitive grants to communities that are bringing together stakeholders and testing new and innovative ways to limit the effects of foreclosures. Communities have shown a lot of initiative, taking responsibility for this crisis when many others have not. And supporting these neighborhood efforts is exactly what we should be doing.

So taken together, the provisions of this plan will help us end this crisis and preserve for millions of families their stake in the American Dream. But we also have to acknowledge the limits of this plan.

Our housing crisis was born of eroding home values, but it was also an erosion of our common values, and in some case, common sense. It was brought about by big banks that traded in risky mortgages in return for profits that were literally too good to be true, by lenders who knowingly took advantage of homebuyers, by homebuyers who knowingly borrowed too much from lenders, by speculators who gambled on ever-rising prices, and by leaders in our Nation's capital who failed to act amidst a deepening crisis.

So solving this crisis will require more than resources; it will require all of us to step back and take responsibility. Government has to take responsibility for setting rules of the road that are fair and fairly enforced. Banks and lenders must be held accountable for ending the practices that got us into this crisis in the first place. And each of us as individuals have to take responsibility for their own actions. That means all of us have to learn to live within our means again and not assume that housing prices are going to go up 20, 30, 40 percent every year.

Now, those core values of common sense and responsibility, those are the values that have defined this Nation. Those are the values that have given substance to our faith in the American Dream. And those are the values we have to restore now at this defining moment.

It will not be easy. But if we move forward with purpose and resolve, with a deepened appreciation of how fundamental the American Dream is and how fragile it can be when we fail to live up to our collective responsibilities, if we go back to our roots, our core values, I am absolutely confident we will overcome this crisis and once again secure that dream not just for ourselves, but for generations to come.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Matt Gehrman, principal, Dobson High School. He also referred to H.R. 1, approved February 17, which was assigned Public Law No. 111–5.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada in Ottawa, Canada
February 19, 2009

President Obama. Hello, good afternoon.

Prime Minister Harper. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

[*At this point, Prime Minister Harper spoke in French. He then translated his remarks into English, as follows.*]

Once again, it is a great pleasure to welcome President Obama to Canada. We are deeply honored that he has chosen Canada for his first foreign visit since taking office. His election to the Presidency launches a new chapter in the rich history of Canada-U.S. relations. It is a relationship between allies, partners, neighbors, and the closest of friends, a relationship built on our shared values: freedom, democracy, and equality of opportunity, epitomized by the President himself.

Our discussions today focused on three main priorities. First, President Obama and I agree that Canada and the United States must work closely to counter the global economic recession by implementing mutually beneficial stimulus measures and by supporting efforts to strengthen the international financial system.

We concur on the need for immediate, concerted action to restore economic growth and to protect workers and families hit hardest by the recession through lowering taxes, ensuring access to credit, and unleashing spending that sustains and stimulates economic activity.

Second, President Obama and I agreed to a new initiative that will further cross-border cooperation on environmental protection and energy security. We are establishing a U.S.-Canada clean energy dialog which commits senior officials from both countries to collaborate on the development of clean energy science and technologies that will reduce greenhouse gases and combat climate change.

Third, the President and I had a productive discussion about our shared priorities for international peace and security, in particular, our commitment to stability and progress in Afghanistan.

This has been a very constructive visit, revealing to both of us a strong consensus on important bilateral and international issues. President Obama, I look forward to working with you in the months ahead to make progress on these issues and build on the long and deep friendship between our two countries and our two peoples.

President Obama. Thank you so much. Thank you. Well, it is a great pleasure to be here in Ottawa. And Prime Minister Harper and I just completed a productive and wide-ranging discussion on the many issues of common concern to the people of the United States and Canada.

I came to Canada on my first trip as President to underscore the closeness and importance of the relationship between our two nations and to reaffirm the commitment of the United States to work with friends and partners to meet the common challenges of our time. As neighbors, we are so closely linked that sometimes we may have a tendency to take our relationship for granted, but the very success of our friendship throughout history demands that we renew and deepen our cooperation here in the 21st century.

We're joined together by the world's largest trading relationship and countless daily interactions that keep our borders open and secure. We share core democratic values and a commitment to work on behalf of peace, prosperity, and human rights around the world. But we also know that our economy and our security are being tested in new ways, and the Prime

Minister and I focused on several of those challenges today.

As he already mentioned, first we shared a commitment to economic recovery. The people of North America are hurting, and that is why our governments are acting. This week, I signed the most sweeping economic recovery plan in our Nation's history. Today the Prime Minister and I discussed our respective plans to create jobs and lay a foundation for growth. The work that's being done by this government to stimulate the economy on this side of the border is welcomed, and we expect that we can take actions in concert to strengthen the auto industry as well.

We know that the financial crisis is global, and so our response must be global. The United States and Canada are working closely on a bilateral basis and within the G–8 and G–20 to restore confidence in our financial markets. I discussed this with Prime Minister Harper, and we look forward to carrying that collaboration to London this spring.

Second, we are launching, as was mentioned, a new initiative to make progress on one of the most pressing challenges of our time, the development and use of clean energy. How we produce and use energy is fundamental to our economic recovery but also our security and our planet, and we know that we can't afford to tackle these issues in isolation. And that's why we're updating our collaboration on energy to meet the needs of the 21st century.

The clean energy dialog that we've established today will strengthen our joint research and development. It will advance carbon reduction technologies, and it will support the development of an electric grid that can help deliver the clean and renewable energy of the future to homes and businesses, both in Canada and the United States. And through this example and through continued international negotiations, the United States and Canada are committed to confronting the threat posed by climate change.

In addition to climate change, Prime Minister Harper and I discussed the need for strong bilateral cooperation on a range of global challenges, one of the most pressing being Afghanistan. The people of Canada have an enormous burden there that they have borne. As I mentioned in an interview prior to this visit, those of us in the United States are extraordinarily grateful for the sacrifices of the families here in Canada of troops that have been deployed and have carried on their missions with extraordinary valor. You've put at risk your most precious resource, your brave men and women in uniform, and so we are very grateful for that.

There is an enduring military mission against Al Qaida and the Taliban in Afghanistan and along the border regions between Afghanistan and Pakistan, but we also have to enhance our diplomacy and our development efforts. And we discussed this in our private meetings. My administration is undertaking a review of our policy so that we forge a comprehensive strategy in pursuit of clear and achievable goals. And as we move forward, we intend to consult very closely with the Government here in Canada to make certain that all our partners are working in the same direction.

In April, we'll have a broader dialog with our NATO allies on how to strengthen the alliance to meet the evolving security challenges around the world.

And finally, we look forward to the Summit of the Americas. My administration is fully committed to active and sustained engagement to advance the common security and prosperity of our hemisphere. We will work closely with Canada in advancing these goals and look forward to a meaningful dialog in Trinidad.

As I've said, the United States is once again ready to lead. But strong leadership depends on strong alliances, and strong alliances depend on constant renewal. Even the closest of neighbors need to make that effort to listen to one another, to keep open the lines of communication, and to structure our cooperation at home and around the world.

That's the work that we've begun here today. I'm extraordinarily grateful to Prime Minister Harper for his hospitality, his graciousness, and his leadership. And I'm looking forward to this being the start of a continued extraordinary relationship between our two countries.

Military Operations in Afghanistan

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, Mr. Prime Minister. I have Afghanistan questions for you

both. Mr. President, General McKiernan requested 30,000 extra troops; your new order calls for 17,000. How likely is it that you will make up that difference after the review you've mentioned? And more importantly, how long can we expect all U.S. combat troops to be in Afghanistan?

And, Mr. Prime Minister, based on your discussions today, are you reconsidering the 2011 deadline for troop withdrawal, and are you also thinking about increasing economic aid to Afghanistan?

President Obama. Well, David [David Jackson, USA Today], the precise reason that we're doing a review is because I think that over the last several years, we took our eye off the ball, and there is a consensus of a deteriorating—that there is a deteriorating situation in Afghanistan. I don't want to prejudge that review. I ordered the additional troops because I felt it was necessary to stabilize the situation there in advance of the elections that are coming up. But we have 60 days of work to do. They—that review, which will be wide ranging, will then result in a report that's presented to me. And from—at that point, we will be able to, I think, provide you with some clearer direction in terms of how we intend to approach Afghanistan.

In terms of length, how long we might be there, obviously, that's going to be contingent on the strategy we develop out of this review. And I'm not prejudging that as well.

I should mention, just to preempt, or to anticipate Prime Minister Harper's—the question directed at him, that I certainly did not press the Prime Minister on any additional commitments beyond the ones that have already been made. All I did was to compliment Canada on not only the troops that are there, the 108 that have fallen as a consequence of engagement in Afghanistan, but also the fact that Canada's largest foreign aid recipient is Afghanistan. There has been extraordinary effort there, and we just wanted to make sure that we were saying thank you.

Prime Minister Harper. Just very quickly, as you probably know, it was just last year that we were able to get through Parliament a bipartisan resolution extending our military engagement in Afghanistan for an additional close to 4 years at that point. As we move forward, we anticipate an even greater engagement on economic development. That was part of the strategy that we adopted.

I would just say this—you know, obviously we're operating within a parliamentary resolution. I would just say this in terms of the United States looking at its own future engagement: We are highly appreciative of the fact the United States is going to be a partner with us on the ground in Kandahar. The goal of our military engagement, its principal goal right now beyond day-to-day security, is the training of the Afghan Army so the Afghans themselves can become responsible for their day-to-day security in that country.

I'm strongly of the view, having led—you know, as a government leader, having been responsible now for a military mission in Kandahar Province, that we are not in the long term, through our own efforts, going to establish peace and security in Afghanistan; that that job ultimately can be done only by the Afghans themselves. So I would hope that all strategies that come forward have the idea of an end date, of a transition to Afghan responsibility for security, and to greater Western partnership for economic development.

Environment

[*The reporter spoke in French, and the question was translated by an interpreter.*]

Q. Good day. In French for you, Mr. Harper. With regard to the environment, going beyond green technology to—how far are your two countries prepared to harmonize your strategy to reduce greenhouse gases, and how will you reconcile your approaches? They seem different when it comes to the tar sands for instance.

[*The reporter then continued in English.*]

For you, Mr. President, I can repeat in English. On the part of the—of the environment, beyond research, technology, and science, how far are your two countries willing to go to harmonize your strategies in

terms of greenhouse gas reductions? And how can you reconcile your two approaches when they seem so different, especially considering the fact that Canada refuses to have hard caps, in part because of the oil sands?

Prime Minister Harper. Do you want me to answer first?

President Obama. Please.

[*Prime Minister Harper spoke in French. He then translated his remarks into English, as follows.*]

Prime Minister Harper. Briefly, first of all, really premature to talk about anything like that, anything like harmonization with the United States. The United States has not had a national dialog and debate on its own detailed approach. Obviously, that's something the President's administration will be doing.

What we have agreed to today is a dialog on clean energy, and particularly on the development of clean energy technology. Both of our governments are making large investments in things such as carbon capture and storage and other new technologies designed to fight climate change. We share our document on this clean energy dialog talks about things we can do together to improve the electricity grid in North America. There are all kinds of things we can do together, independent of any American regulatory approach, on climate change.

We will be watching what the United States does very—with a lot of interest for the obvious reasons that, as we all know, Canada has had great difficulty developing an effective regulatory regime alone in the context of a integrated continental economy. It's very hard to have a tough regulatory system here when we are competed with—competing with an unregulated economy south of the border.

So we'll be watching what the United States does. We'll be looking ourselves, for our own sake, at opportunities for harmonization to make our policies as effective as they can. And I don't think the differences are near as stark as you would suggest. When I look at the President's platform, the kind of targets his administration has laid out for the reduction of greenhouse gases are very similar to ours. You say we have intensity; they have absolute. But the truth is these are just two different ways of measuring the same thing. You can convert one to the other, if that's what you want to do.

So I'm quite optimistic. I'll be watching what's done in the United States with great interest. But I'm quite optimistic that we now have a partner on the North American continent that will provide leadership to the world on the climate change issue, and I think that's an important development.

President Obama. Well, this is not just a U.S. or a Canadian issue; this is a worldwide issue that we're going to have to confront. There are good, sound economic reasons for us to address this issue. You know, to the extent that, on both sides of the border, we can make our economies more energy efficient that saves consumers money, that saves businesses money, it has the added advantage of enhancing our energy security. And we are very grateful for the relationship that we have with Canada; Canada being one of—being our largest energy supplier.

But I think increasingly we have to take into account that the issue of climate change and greenhouse gases is something that's going to have an impact on all of us. And as two relatively wealthy countries, it's important for us to show leadership in this area. I think the clean energy dialog is an extraordinary beginning because right now there are no silver bullets to solve all of our energy problems. We're going to have to try a whole range of things, and that's why sharing technology, sharing ideas, sharing research and development is so important.

Here in Canada you have the issue of the oil sands. In the United States, we have issues around coal, for example, which is extraordinarily plentiful and runs a lot of our power plants. And if we can figure out how to capture the carbon, that would make an enormous difference in how we operate. Right now the technologies are at least not cost-effective.

So my expectation is, is that this clean energy dialog will move us in the right direction. We're not going to solve these problems overnight, as Prime Minister Harper indicated. We have to complete our domestic debate and discussion around these issues. My hope is, is that we can show leadership so that by the time the international conference takes place in Copenhagen

that the United States has shown itself committed and ready to do its part.

I think the more that we can coordinate in—with Canada, as well as Mexico, a country that has already shown interest in leadership on this issue—and when I spoke to President Calderon, he indicated this is an area of interest to him—the more that, within this hemisphere, we can show leadership, I think the more likely it is that we can draw in countries like China and India, whose participation is absolutely critical for us to be able to solve this problem over the long term.

And, as Prime Minister Harper suggested, there are going to be a number of different ways to go after this problem. You know, we've suggested a cap and trade system. There are other countries who've discussed the possibilities of a carbon tax. I think there's no country on Earth that is not concerned about balancing dealing with this issue on the environmental side and making sure that, in the midst of a severe recession, that it's not having too much of an adverse impact on economic growth and employment.

So we think that we can benefit by listening and sharing ideas. And my hope is, is that we emerge from this process firmly committed to dealing with an issue that, ultimately, the Prime Minister's children and my children are going to have to live with for many years.

North American Free Trade Agreement

Q. Thank you, to both of you. I've got a question for both of you. Mr. President, on Tuesday you said that now is not the time to reopen NAFTA. But your aides said that you would be trying to convince our friends in Canada and in Mexico of the rightness of your position. So, first, did you convince our friends in Canada? And when is the right time to incorporate labor and environmental standards into the main body of NAFTA?

Second, for Prime Minister Harper. Mr. Prime Minister, is there a way for a "Buy American" provision to be compliant with the U.S. obligations under the World Trade Organization?

President Obama. Well, first of all, Jonathan [Jonathan Weisman, Wall Street Journal], I'm not sure that was my exact quote. I always get a little nervous about responding to quotes without me actually seeing it. I think what I said was, is that now is a time where we've got to be very careful about any signals of protectionism, because, as the economy of the world contracts, I think there's going to be a strong impulse on the part of constituencies in all countries to see if we—they can engage in "beggar thy neighbor" policies. And as, obviously, one of the largest economies in the world, it's important for us to make sure that we are showing leadership in the belief that trade ultimately is beneficial to all countries.

Having said that, what I also indicated was that with a NAFTA agreement that has labor provisions and environmental provisions as side agreements, it strikes me if those side agreements mean anything then they might as well be incorporated into the main body of the agreement so that they can be effectively enforced. And I think it is important, whether we're talking about our relationships with Canada or our relationships with Mexico, that all countries concerned are thinking about how workers are being treated and all countries concerned are thinking about environmental issues of the sort that Emmanuelle [Emmanuelle Latraverse, Radio-Canada] just raised earlier.

So you know, I raised this issue with Prime Minister Harper. My hope is, is that as our advisers and staffs and economic teams work this through; that there's a way of doing this that is not disruptive to the extraordinarily important trade relationships that exist between the United States and Canada.

Now you didn't ask me about the "Buy American" provisions, but since it relates to our recovery package, let me just reiterate—and I said this very clearly before the bill was passed and before I signed it—that I think it was very important to make sure that any provisions that were there were consonant with our obligations under WTO and NAFTA.

And I think that is what we achieved. I recognize the concerns of Canada, given how significant trade with the United States is to the Canadian economy. I provided Prime Minister Harper an assurance that I want to grow trade

and not contract it. And I don't think that there was anything in the recovery package that is adverse to that goal.

Prime Minister Harper. I'll answer both questions as well. First of all, I just think it's important to reiterate that since NAFTA came into force, and more importantly since Canada signed its free trade agreement with the United States in 1988, trade agreements between our two countries have been nothing but beneficial for these two countries. There has been a massive explosion of trade. It was already the biggest trading relationship in the world; it's so much bigger now. And that trade supports, you know, countless millions of jobs.

And I don't think we should also forget the leadership that was established in that. You know, this was about the end of the cold war, and Canada and the U.S. signed the first modern generation trade agreement that really started the proliferation of these types of agreements, which really gave us the growth of the global economy.

Now, you know, I know some aspects of trade invariably cause political concerns, but nobody should think for a minute that trade between Canada and the United States is anything but a benefit between the two of us. And quite frankly, the trade challenges we face are common trade challenges. The trade challenges we face in North America are common trade challenges; they're not problems between our countries.

So I just think it's always important to keep this in mind. The President and I did have a good discussion of his concerns. You know, our position is that we're perfectly willing to look at ways we can address some of these concerns, which I understand, without, you know, opening the whole NAFTA and unraveling what is a very complex agreement. But we had a good discussion on that, and I think—I'm hopeful we'll be able to make some progress.

On the "Buy American" provisions—and let's also be very clear, as well, that in both WTO and NAFTA there are industries and there are ways in which—and there are levels of government at which one can have domestic preferences and purchasing policies. These things are allowed, in some cases, but they are certainly not allowed without limit. We expect the United States to adhere to its international obligations. I have every expectation, based on what the President has told me and what he's said publicly many times in the past that the United States will do just that.

But I can't emphasize how important it is that we do that. We have agreed in Canada and, you know, all the major countries of the world through the G–20, we agreed to pursue economic stimulus measures—not just to stimulate our own economies but to recognize that we have a synchronized global recession that requires policies that will not just benefit ourselves but benefit our trading partners at the same time. If we pursue stimulus packages, the goal of which is only to benefit ourselves or to benefit ourselves, worse, at the expense of others, we will deepen the world recession, not solve it.

So I think it's critical that the United States has been a leader for a long time in the goals of an open global economy. I think it's critical that that leadership continue. And I'm quite confident that the United States will respect those obligations and continue to be a leader on the need for globalized trade.

If I could just comment on our stimulus package, one of the things we did in our stimulus package was actually remove duties on some imported goods. Now, part of the reason we did that, it's in our own economic interest, but also, as well, it will help stimulate continental and global trade. And this is important for our recovery. We know as a small economy we can't recover without recovery in the United States and recovery around the world. But that's true for all of us these days.

Canada-U.S. Relations/Border Security/U.S. Auto Industry/Economic Stabilization

Q. I have a question for both of you. Mr. President, during your meetings today, did you discuss the possibility of Canada stepping up its stimulus plans? And secondly, for both of you, what do you think the Canada-U.S. relationship will look like in 4 years? What will the auto sector look like? Will the border be thicker or thinner? And will you have a carbon market?

President Obama. See, you stuffed about six questions in there. [*Laughter*] Were you talking to Jonathan? Is that—[*laughter*].

Q. I have more.

President Obama. Yes, I'll bet. Well, first of all, I'll answer your last question first. I expect that, 4 years from now, the U.S.-Canadian relationship will be even stronger than it is today. I expect that you will see increased trade. I think we will see continued integration of efforts on the—on energy in various industries, and I think that's to be welcomed.

I'm a little biased here because I've got a brother-in-law who's Canadian, and I have two of my key staff people who hail from Canada. And I love this country and think that we could not have a better friend and ally. And so I'm going to do everything that I can to make sure that our relationship is strengthened.

You mentioned a couple of specific issues, the idea of thickening of borders. One of the things that I would like to see is—and we—Prime Minister Harper and I discussed this—how we can use some of our stimulus and infrastructure spending that is already being planned around potentially easing some of these bottlenecks in our border. Now, we've got very real security concerns, as does Canada. But I think that it is possible for us to balance our security concerns with an open border that continues to encourage this extraordinary trade relationship in which we have $1.5 billion worth of trade going back and forth every single day.

With respect to the auto industry, obviously, we are concerned—we're deeply concerned about the current state of the North American auto industry. It is an integrated industry. When we provided our initial Federal help to the auto industry, Prime Minister Harper stepped up and provided assistance that was commensurate with the stake that Canada has in the auto industry.

We have just received the report back from GM and Chrysler in terms of how they intend to move forward. My economic team is in the process of evaluating it. One thing we know for certain is that there's going to have to be a significant restructuring of that industry. And as that restructuring takes place, one in which all parties involved—shareholders, creditors, workers, management, suppliers, dealers, as all of those parties come together to figure out what is a sustainable and vibrant auto—North American auto industry, it's going to be very important for our Government to coordinate closely with the Canadian Government in whatever approach that we decide to take. And we are committed to doing that.

And finally, with respect to stimulus, I think that, as Prime Minister Harper mentioned, Canada has put in place its own stimulus package. We obviously are very proud of the recovery act that I recently signed, not only because it provides a short-term boost to the economy and provides relief to families that really need help, but I think it also will lay the groundwork for long-term growth and prosperity.

We were talking earlier about the issue of the electric grid. The potential that exists for creating ways of delivering energy from wind and solar across vast plains to get to urban areas and populated areas is enormously promising. That's why we are investing billions of dollars to help jump-start that process.

And so we think we've taken the right approach to not only get the economy moving again and to fill domestic demand as well as global demand, but also I think Prime Minister Harper is taking the same approach. And to the extent that as we go to the G–20 summit, that we are saying the most significant economies in the world all taking these steps in concert, then more—the more likely we are that we're going to be able to slow the recessionary trends, reverse them, and start growing the economy again, which ultimately is the bottom line for both the Prime Minister and myself—making sure that Americans, Canadians have good jobs that pay good wages, allow them to support a family and send their kids to college, and let their children aspire to new heights.

So I think we're going to continue to coordinate as closely as possible to make sure that we are helping families on both sides of the border.

Prime Minister Harper. You did ask several questions. I'll try and touch on a few of them. On stimulus, first of all, it's important to

understand that Canada's economic stimulus package is very large. It's certainly larger than the kind of numbers the IMF was talking about in the fall with the provincial action that we will bring in to our stimulus spending—will be close to 2 percent of GDP for this year, a percent and a half for next year. This is not as large as the stimulus package in the United States. But the issues in the United States are different, and in fairness, they are bigger than in Canada.

Let me just give you a concrete example of the difference; I could talk about housing, or the banking sector. But the American stimulus package contains a significant money—a significant pot of money being transferred to lower levels of government to deal with health care. Well, in Canada, as you know, we already have permanent health care transfer arrangements with our Provinces before this economic crisis, so not all of these things are directly transferable to the Canadian experience. But by any measure, ours is a very large stimulus program.

As the President mentioned, we talked about today how we can use our investments in infrastructure to focus specifically on border infrastructure that we share. We know well at Detroit/Windsor and elsewhere in Canada that the growth of our trade is straining our border infrastructure that's independent even of security demands. So there may be things we can do there jointly in the name of economic stimulus that are beneficial for the long term.

The statement lays out today a whole bunch of initiatives we're undertaking, and I think President Obama mentioned them. Beyond border infrastructure, we have joint action going on on the auto sector. We were working closely with the out-coming administration. We will be continuing to work with President Obama's administration on what is an integrated industry needs an integrated solution.

We are engaged in Afghanistan. We talked about that at length. We are launching a clean energy dialog on one of the most important challenges of the next decade, and that is climate change. So you know, I see a range of initiatives that will carry us forward for many years.

I do want to address two specific things, though, you raised—one is border thickening, and one is kind of 4 years from now. On the thickening of the border, I just want to make this clear—and I want to make this clear to our American friends—not only have we since 9/11 made significant investments in security and security along our border, the view of this Government is unequivocal: Threats to the United States are threats to Canada.

There is no such thing as a threat to the national security of the United States which does not represent a direct threat to this country. We as Canadians have every incentive to be as cooperative and alarmed about the threats that exist to the North American continent in the modern age as do the Government and people of the United States. That's the approach with which we treat the border. Obviously, we've been concerned about the thickening of the border.

You know, in our judgment—and we'll have some time to talk about this as—as we move along in our respective Governments. We're looking at—the key is to look at how we can deal with security in a way that does not inhibit commerce and social interaction. That is the real challenge. But let there be no—and that's where thickening of the border concerns us—but let there be no illusion about the fact that we take these security concerns as seriously as our American friends.

In terms of big picture, you know, I think this would be the safest prediction in the world: That today Canada and the United States are closer economically, socially, culturally, in terms of our international partnerships than any two nations on the face of the Earth—closer friends than any two nations on the face of the Earth. And I think we can safely predict that in 4 years time, we will be in exactly the same spot.

What we can do with that in the meantime—and what I'm sure President Obama will want to do with that—is to take that close relationship that is so deeply integrated when it comes to things like trade and military and defense considerations, things where we have not only established a close friendship, but where we have established models that others who want to pursue close friendships have used around the world—that we can take those things and we can continue to lead in the

future. We can continue to show how two countries can work together in ways that pursue global cooperation and integration to mutual benefit.

And as we all know, one of President Obama's big missions is to continue world leadership by the United States of America, but in a way that is more collaborative. And I'm convinced that by working with our country, he will have no greater opportunity than to demonstrate exactly how that model can operate over the next 4 years.

President Obama. And let me just say that, to echo what the Prime Minister said, we have no doubt about Canada's commitment to security in the United States as well as Canada. Obviously, we've got long-lasting relationships around NORAD, for example, and the same is true with respect to border security. There's been extraordinary cooperation, and we expect that that will continue.

And Prime Minister Harper is right. It's a safe bet that the United States and Canada will continue to enjoy an extraordinary friendship, and together I think we've got an opportunity to show the world that the values that we care about—of democracy, of human rights, of economic growth and prosperity—that these are values that the world can embrace, and that we can show leadership. And I'm very much looking forward to working with this Government and all Canadians in order to promote these values.

I want to also, by the way, thank some of the Canadians who came over the border to campaign for me during the election. [*Laughter*] It was much appreciated. And I'm looking forward to coming back to Canada as soon as it warms up. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 2:46 p.m. at Parliament Hill. In his remarks, the President referred to President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico; and his brother-in-law Konrad Ng. A reporter referred to Gen. David D. McKiernan, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan.

Remarks to the United States Conference of Mayors
February 20, 2009

Thank you everybody. Thank you. Please have a seat. Thank you so much. Whenever I have the opportunity to meet with mayors, I think about how I got my start doing what you do each day: working with folks at the local level and doing our best to make a real impact on the lives of ordinary Americans. And that's just another reason why I'm so happy to welcome all of you here today.

I want to offer—take a little personal prerogative here and welcome my own hometown mayor, my friend Rich Daley. His steady leadership has proven again and again that the American city can be a place of boundless opportunity and a source of solutions to our public problems; he has made a deep and lasting difference in the quality of life for millions of Chicagoans. I'm surprised he's still talking to me because I stole Arne Duncan from him—[*laughter*]—but I am confident that he will continue to make great strides.

I see friends from all over the place; some old friends—well, not old in years, but people who I've known a long time. My other hometown mayor, Mufi, it's great to see you all the way from Honolulu. I've got Mayor Riley and others who are in attendance; Shirley Franklin, doing great work; and Mayor Villaraigosa and Mayor Dellums from—we've got the California contingent. So I'm grateful to all of you.

And I think all of you understand that we meet at such an urgent time. Last night, I signed an Executive order establishing the White House Office of Urban Affairs. And I've chosen Adolfo Carrion to be its first director. Adolfo wrote a real success story in the Bronx as borough president, and now he's going to be working with all of you to write our next success stories in cities across the country.

He's going to be responsible for coordinating all Federal urban programs, and I've asked him to set up an advisory council with mayors and other urban leaders so that we can

develop a new metropolitan strategy based on the lessons that you've learned. Now, rebuilding our economies and renewing our cities is going to require a true partnership between mayors and the White House, and that partnership has to begin right now.

Those of you who have traveled great distances to be here come from different parties and philosophies. You govern very different cities; they're made up of different citizenries with different demographic makeups. But today, in the face of our common challenges, you're all hearing the same stories. I know because I'm getting letters from constituents all across the country, in many of your cities.

But you're on the frontlines in our communities. You know what happens when folks get laid off or they lose their homes or their health care, and they turn to the mayor's office for help. And just as your services stretch, your classrooms get crowded, and your streets grow less safe, your budgets shrink. You can't deficit spend, so you face impossible choices: raising taxes, cutting essential services, laying off teachers, firefighters, police officers.

And that's why the recovery plan we put into action this week is so important. It's a plan that will save or create 3.5 million jobs over the next 2 years, will help those hardest hit by our economic crisis. It will aid State and local governments in hopes you can avoid those excruciating choices.

It provides greater unemployment insurance for nearly 18 million Americans and protects health care for 7 million who lost their health care along with their jobs. It includes the most progressive tax cuts in our history, spurring job creation and putting money into the pockets of 95 percent of all hard-working families. It invests in what works for our cities by funding programs like the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant and the COPS program, which boost public safety and bring down crime. It rewards responsibility, making sure that if you work hard, you won't have to raise a child below the poverty line.

But what makes this recovery plan so important isn't just the jobs it will create or the immediate help it provides; it's that we are putting Americans to work doing the work America needs done in critical areas that have been neglected for too long. So this plan does more to lay a new foundation for our cities' growth and opportunity than anything Washington has done in generations, and it will bring real and lasting change for generations to come.

Because we know we can't build our economic future on the transportation and information networks of the past, we're remaking our cities with the largest new investment in our Nation's infrastructure since Eisenhower built an Interstate Highway System in the 1950s. Ray LaHood is going to be busy because we're putting 400,000 men and women to work rebuilding our crumbling roads and our bridges, repairing our faulty dams and levees, replacing our aging water and sewer pipes, and rolling out broadband lines to nearly every community in America. We are going to unleash the potential of all our regions by connecting them with world-class transit systems and high-speed rail, making our metropolitan areas more livable and sustainable in the process.

Because we know education is the single best bet we can make to change the odds of our children and our cities, we are making the largest investment in education in our Nation's history. It will prevent harmful education cuts and save jobs of tens of thousands of teachers, 14,000 just in New York City. And it will make a historic investment in early childhood education and upgrade classrooms and libraries and labs across America so that millions of our children are prepared to compete in the 21st century.

Because we know that spiraling health care costs are crushing families and businesses alike and straining budgets across government, we're taking the most meaningful steps in years to modernize our health care system. We're going to computerize America's medical records while maintaining rigorous privacy standards, saving billions of dollars and countless lives. We'll focus on prevention, keeping millions of Americans from having to set into the doctor's office in the first place. Taken together with the earlier enactment this month of long-delayed laws to extend health care to millions of—more children of working families, we've done more in 30 days to advance the cause of health care reform than this country has done in a decade.

And because we know we can't power America's future on energy that's controlled by foreign dictators, we're making an investment that within 3 years will double the renewable energy output it's taken us 35 years to reach. We'll provide tax credits and loan guarantees to companies that create this energy, allowing them to expand rather than lay people off. We'll fund the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant you conceived, saving our cities and our consumers money. We'll build a bigger, better, smarter electricity grid that delivers clean energy from communities that produce it to the cities that need it.

So these are the steps we're taking to help you turn this crisis into opportunity and bring our cities into the future. Now, Washington can't solve all the problems facing our cities, and I know you don't expect us to. Instead of waiting for Washington, many of you have already made our cities laboratories of change, coming up with innovative new ways to solve the problems of our time.

And one of the great pleasures of running for President was having a chance to see great work on renewable energy in Des Moines or, you know, seeing what kinds of wonderful companies are being created in Seattle, and hearing about some of the urban planning strategies that are taking place in Charleston. So all of you have already taken the ball and run with it, even when you weren't getting help from here. But it won't be bad to get some help because—[*applause*].

You know, instead of debating the existence of climate change, mayors like Greg Nickels in Seattle are leading efforts to make cities greener and more efficient. Instead of just talking about health care, mayors like Gavin Newsom in San Francisco have been ensuring that those in need receive it. Instead of wringing your hands over poverty, you've got Antonio in Los Angeles making relentless efforts to alleviate it.

You shouldn't have to succeed, though, despite Washington; you should be succeeding with a hand from Washington, and that's what you're going to get now.

Now, what is required in return, what I will need from all of you, is unprecedented responsibility and accountability on all of our parts. The American people are watching. They need this plan to work. They expect to see the money that they've earned, that they've worked so hard to earn, spent in its intended purposes without waste, without inefficiency, without fraud.

And that's why I'm assigning a team of managers to ensure that every dollar is spent wisely. And that's why we've created recovery.gov, so that every American can go online to see how their money is spent and hold their Federal, State, and local officials to the highest standards they expect.

So I want to be clear about this: We cannot tolerate business as usual, not in Washington, not in our State capitals, not in America's cities and towns. We will use the new tools that the recovery act gives us to watch the taxpayers' money with more rigor and transparency than ever. If a Federal agency proposes a project that will waste that money, I will not hesitate to call them out on it and put a stop to it.

And I want everybody here to be on notice that if a local government does the same, I will call them out on it and use the full power of my office and our administration to stop it. We have asked for the unprecedented trust of the American people to deal boldly with the greatest economic crisis we've seen in decades and the privilege of investing unprecedented amounts of their hard-earned money to address this crisis. And with that comes unprecedented obligations to spend that money wisely, free from politics and free from personal agendas.

On this I will not compromise or tolerate any shortcuts. The American people are looking to us, each of you, as well as myself and Joe and others in our administration, for leadership, and it's up to us to reward their faith.

Now, this plan doesn't mark the end of what we'll do together; it marks the beginning. My administration has outlined plans to stabilize, repair, and reform our banking system, to get credit flowing to families and businesses, to stem the spread of foreclosures and keep families in their homes. Together we will tackle the urban challenges of our time and foster diverse, creative, and imaginative economies

that bring opportunity to every corner of our cities.

We'll do all this because despite the different backgrounds of the mayors in this room, we all share the same vision for our cities: vibrant places that provide our children with every chance to learn and to grow; that allow our businesses and workers the best opportunity to innovate and succeed; that let our older Americans live out their best years in the midst of all that metropolitan life can offer.

I know this change is possible. I know because I saw it in—all those years ago in neighborhoods on the south side of Chicago, where ordinary Americans came together and worked alongside the mayor's office to forge a better future. I know because I've seen it in cities across this country, where many of you that I had a chance to meet with, I saw how you focused on fresh ideas over stale ideology and you moved your cities forward. And I know it because I see it in the faces of Americans everywhere who are ready to roll up their sleeves and join in the work of remaking this Nation.

So now it falls to us to seize the possibilities of this moment and convert peril into promise, see to it that our cities and our people emerge from this moment stronger than they were before. Starting today, that's what you and I are going to do together. And I'm absolutely confident that our people will benefit and people will look back and say that this was a turning point; this was a moment where, in the midst of great crisis, leadership was shown, and we created a new platform for success for all Americans in the future.

Thank you so much, everybody. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:36 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago, IL; Secretary of Education Arne Duncan; Mayor Mufi Hannemann of Honolulu, HI; Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr., of Charleston, SC; Mayor Shirley Franklin of Atlanta, GA; Mayor Antonio R. Villaraigosa of Los Angeles, CA; Mayor Ron Dellums of Oakland, CA; Secretary of Transportation Raymond H. LaHood; and Vice President Joe Biden. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Biden.

The President's Weekly Address
February 21, 2009

Earlier this week, I signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the most sweeping economic recovery plan in history. Because of this plan, 3½ million Americans will now go to work doing the work that America needs done.

I am grateful to Congress, Governors, and mayors across the country and to all of you whose support made this critical step possible.

Because of what we did together, there will now be shovels in the ground, cranes in the air, and workers rebuilding our crumbling roads and bridges and repairing our faulty levees and dams. Because of what we did, companies large and small that produce renewable energy can now apply for loan guarantees and tax credits and find ways to grow, instead of laying people off, and families can lower their energy bills by weatherizing their homes.

Because of what we did, our children can now graduate from 21st century schools, and millions more can do what was unaffordable just last week and get their college degree. Because of what we did, lives will be saved and health costs will be cut with new computerized medical records. Because of what we did, there will now be police on the beat, firefighters on the job, and teachers preparing lesson plans who thought they would not be able to continue pursuing their critical missions. And ensure that all of this is done with an unprecedented level of transparency and accountability, I have assigned a team of managers to make sure that precious tax dollars are invested wisely and well.

Because of what we did, 95 percent of all working families will get a tax cut, in keeping with a promise I made on the campaign. And I'm pleased to announce that this morning the Treasury Department began directing

employers to reduce the amount of taxes withheld from paychecks, meaning that by April 1st, a typical family will begin taking home at least $65 more every month. Never before in our history has a tax cut taken effect faster or gone to so many hard-working Americans.

But as important as it was that I was able to sign this plan into law, it is only a first step on the road to economic recovery. And we can't fail to complete the journey. That will require stemming the spread of foreclosures and falling home values and doing all we can to help responsible homeowners stay in their homes, which is exactly what the housing plan I announced last week will help us do.

It will require stabilizing and repairing our banking system and getting credit flowing again to families and businesses. It will require reforming the broken regulatory system that made this crisis possible and recognizing that it's only by setting and enforcing 21st century rules of the road that we can build a thriving economy.

And it will require doing all we can to get exploding deficits under control as our economy begins to recover. That work begins on Monday, when I will convene a fiscal summit of independent experts and unions, advocacy groups and Members of Congress to discuss how we can cut the trillion dollar deficit that we've inherited. On Tuesday, I will speak to the Nation about our urgent national priorities, and on Thursday, I'll release a budget that's sober in its assessments, honest in its accounting, and lays out in detail my strategy for investing in what we need, cutting what we don't, and restoring fiscal discipline.

No single piece of this broad economic recovery can, by itself, meet the demands that have been placed on us. We can't help people find work or pay their bills unless we unlock credit for families and businesses. We can't solve our housing crisis unless we help people find work so that they can make payments on their homes. We can't produce shared prosperity without firm rules of the road, and we can't generate sustained growth without getting our deficits under control. In short, we cannot successfully address any of our problems without addressing them all. And that is exactly what the strategy we are pursuing is designed to do.

None of this will be easy. The road ahead will be long and full of hazards. But I am confident that we as a people have the strength and wisdom to carry out this strategy and overcome this crisis. And if we do, our economy and our country will be better and stronger for it.

Thank you.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:45 p.m. on February 20 in the Blue Room at the White House for broadcast on February 21. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 20 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 21. In his address, the President referred to H.R. 1, which was assigned Public Law No. 111–5.

Remarks to the National Governors Association
February 23, 2009

Thank you very much. Everybody, please have a seat.

First of all, thanks for not breaking anything last night. [*Laughter*] Thank you also for waiting until I had left before you started the conga line. I don't know whether Rendell was responsible for that or—but I hear it was quite a spectacle. [*Laughter*] But Michelle and I just had a wonderful time last night, and I hope all of you enjoyed it. And it was a great kick-off of what we hope will be an atmosphere here in the White House that is welcoming and that reminds everybody that this is the people's house. We are just temporary occupants. This is a place that belongs to the American people, and we want to make sure that everybody understands it's open.

Almost 3 months ago, we came together in Philadelphia to listen to one another, to share ideas, and to try to push some of our

ideological rigidity aside to formulate a recovery plan that would bring some relief to your States and to the American people.

And I want to thank so many of you who were active throughout this process to get the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act done. I don't want to single out too many folks, but Governor Rendell, Governor Douglas, worked tirelessly. We had people like Governor Patrick and Governor Schweitzer, Schwarzenegger, Crist, who were out there consistently promoting the plan. And as a consequence, we got this passed through Congress in record time.

And because of what we did together, this plan will save or create at least 3.5 million jobs, in every State across the country. It will keep your police officers on the beat, your firefighters on the job, your teachers in the classroom. It will provide expanded unemployment insurance and protect health care for your residents who have been laid off. And beginning April 1st, it will put more money back into the pockets of 95 percent of your working families.

So this plan will ensure that you don't have to make cuts to essential services that Americans rely on now more than ever. And to show you that we are serious about putting this recovery plan into action swiftly, I'm announcing today that this Wednesday, our administration will begin distributing more than $15 billion in Federal assistance under the Recovery Act to help you cover the costs of your Medicaid programs, I know, something that is going to be of great relief to many of you.

That means that by the time most of you get home, money will be waiting to help 20 million vulnerable Americans in your States keep their health care coverage. Children with asthma will be able to breathe easier, seniors won't need to fear losing their doctors, and pregnant women with limited means won't have to worry about the health of their babies. So let me be clear, though: This is not a blank check. I know you've heard this repeatedly over the last few days, but I want to reiterate it. These funds are intended to go directly towards helping struggling Americans keep their health coverage. We want to make sure that that's what's happening, and we're going to work with you closely to make sure that this money is spent the way it's supposed to.

We will get the rest of this plan moving to put Americans to work doing the work America needs done, making an immediate impact while laying the foundation for our lasting growth and prosperity.

These are the steps that we're taking to help you turn this crisis into an opportunity and pave the way for future prosperity. But I know that many of you, rather than wait for Washington, have already made that happen in your States. You are innovators, and much of the work that you've done has already made a lasting impact and change in people's lives. Instead of debating the existence of climate change, Governors like the 7 of you of you working together in the Western Climate Initiative, and the 10 of you who are working together on the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative are leading the way in environmental and energy policy. Instead of waiting around for the jobs of the future, Governors like Governor Gregoire and Governor Granholm have sparked the creation of cutting-edge companies and tens of thousands of new green jobs. And instead of passing the buck on accountability and efficiency, Governors like Martin O'Malley and Governor Kaine have revolutionized performance management systems, showing the American people precisely how their governments are working for them.

The point that I made yesterday, or last night, is something that I want to reiterate though. You shouldn't be succeeding despite Washington; you should be succeeding with a hand from Washington, and that's what we intend to give you in this administration. In return, we'll expect a lot from you as the hard work of making the recovery plan's promise a reality begins.

And that's why I'm announcing today that I'm asking my Vice President, Joe Biden, to oversee our administration's implementation efforts. Beginning this week, Joe will meet regularly with key members of my Cabinet to make sure our efforts are not just swift, but also efficient and effective. Joe is also going to work closely with you, our Nation's Governors, as well as our mayors and everyone else involved in this effort, to keep things on track. And the

fact that I'm asking my Vice President to personally lead this effort shows how important it is for our country and our future to get this right, and I thank him for his willingness to take on this critical task.

In the coming weeks, we're also going to appoint some of the Nation's best managers and public officials to work with the Vice President on this effort. And I'm pleased to make the first of those announcements today with the appointment of Earl Devaney as the Chair of the Recovery Act Transparency and Accountability Board. Where did Earl go? There he is. Stand up, Earl, so everybody can see you.

For nearly a decade as Inspector General at the Interior Department, Earl has doggedly pursued waste, fraud, and mismanagement. He has the reputation of being one of the best IGs that we have in this town. And Joe and I can't think of a more tenacious and efficient guardian of the hard-earned tax dollars the American people have entrusted us to wisely invest. I pointed out just when I saw him, I mean, he looks like an inspector there. [*Laughter*] He's tough, you know; he barely cracks a smile. Earl is here with us today. I thank him for his willingness to take on this difficult new assignment.

And I expect each of you to approach implementation of this recovery plan with the same seriousness of purpose and the same sense of accountability, because the American people are watching. They need this plan to work, and they expect to see their money spent in its intended purpose.

And that's why we've created recovery.gov, a web site so that every American can go online to see how their money is spent and hold their Federal, State, and local officials to the high standards that they expect. And I want to applaud Governors Kaine, Patrick, and Strickland for already having created their own recovery implementation web sites to allow for the monitoring and accountability at the local level. I encourage every one of you to follow suit.

Let me be clear: We cannot tolerate business as usual, not in Washington, but also not in our State capitals. With Mr. Devaney's leadership, we will use the new tools that the Recovery Act gives us to watch the taxpayers' money with more rigor and transparency than ever.

If a Federal agency proposes a project that will waste that money, I will put a stop to it. But I want everybody here to be on notice that if a State government does the same, then I will call them out on it, and use the full power of my office and our administration to stop it.

We are addressing the greatest economic crisis we have seen in decades by investing unprecedented amounts of the American people's hard-earned money. And with that comes an unprecedented obligation to do so wisely, free from politics and personal agendas. And on this I will not compromise or tolerate shortcuts. The American people are looking to us for leadership, and it falls on us now to reward their faith and build a better future for our country. And I have every confidence that we can all do this.

Let me make one last point and then I'm going to bring Joe up. There has been some healthy debate over the last few weeks, last few days, about this stimulus package, even among the Governors. And I think that's a healthy debate. And that keeps me on my toes; it keeps our administration on our toes. But I just want us to not lose perspective of the fact that most of the things that have been the topic of argument over the last several days amount to a fraction of the overall stimulus package. This sometimes gets lost in the cable chatter.

For example, I think there are some very legitimate concerns on the part of some about the sustainability of expanding unemployment insurance. What hasn't been noted is, is that that is $7 billion of a $787 billion program, and it's not even the majority of the expansion of unemployment insurance. So it is possible for those who are concerned about sustaining a change that increases eligibility for part-time workers to still see the benefit of 30 billion-plus that is going even if you don't make the change.

So the reason I make that point is, I just want to make sure that we're having an honest debate and presenting to the American people a fulsome accounting of what is going on in

this program. You know, when I hear people say, "Well, there's a lot of waste in this program," well, from my perspective at least, keeping teachers in the classroom is not wasteful. From my perspective, tax cuts to 95 percent of working families is not wasteful. From my perspective, providing all of you additional resources to rebuild roads and bridges and levees and dams that will enhance the quality of life of your State, but also make it more economically competitive, that's not wasteful.

And so if we agree on 90 percent of the stuff, and we're spending all our time on television arguing about 1, 2, 3 percent of the spending in this thing, and somehow it's being characterized in broad brush as wasteful spending, that starts sounding more like politics. And that's what right now we don't have time to do.

So I will always be open to honest disagreements, and I think there are some legitimate concerns that can be raised on a whole host of these issues. And you're responsible at the State level, and if the Federal Government gives you something now, and then 2 years later it's gone and people are looking to you and starting to blame you, I don't want to put you in that position. And so you need to think about how this money is going to be spent wisely.

What I don't want us to do, though, is to just get caught up in the same old stuff that inhibits us from acting effectively and in concert. There's going to be ample time for campaigns down the road. Right now we've got to make sure that we're standing up for the America people and putting them back to work.

All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:29 a.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Edward G. Rendell of Pennsylvania; Gov. James H. Douglas of Vermont; Gov. Deval L. Patrick of Massachusetts; Gov. Brian D. Schweitzer of Montana; Gov. Arnold A. Schwarzenegger of California; Gov. Charles J. Crist, Jr., of Florida; Gov. Christine O. Gregoire of Washington; Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm of Michigan; Gov. Martin J. O'Malley of Maryland; Gov. Timothy M. Kaine of Virginia; and Gov. Theodore Strickland of Ohio. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden.

Remarks at the Fiscal Responsibility Summit
February 23, 2009

Thank you everybody. Please have a seat. Thank you very much. Thank you to Mark and Bob and to Peter. It is wonderful to see the Speaker here. And we've got our representatives; I don't see Harry here, but we've got Dick Durbin in his stead. Mitch, thank you for being here; John Boehner, to all the congressional leadership, thank you.

My administration came into office 1 month ago in the depths of an economic crisis unlike any that we've seen in generations. And we recognized that we needed to act boldly, decisively, and quickly, and that's precisely what we did.

Within our first 30 days in office, we passed the most sweeping economic recovery package in history to create or save 3.5 million new jobs, provide relief to struggling families, and lay the foundation for long-term growth and prosperity. And I had an opportunity to talk to the Nation's Governors today, and both Republicans and Democrats have ideas about how they are going to use that money to make sure that people are put back to work and that we can stem some of the job loss that's taking place.

I also laid out my housing plan to break the cycle of falling home values and rising foreclosures that's devastated so many communities. And we put forth a financial stability plan to start shoring up our banks so we can free up credit and jump-start lending and restore confidence in our financial system.

These are all extraordinary, but necessary, measures to address this economic emergency, and as has already been noted, they will come at a cost. This administration has inherited a $1.3 trillion deficit—the largest in our Nation's history—and our investments to rescue our economy will add to that deficit in the short term. We also have long-term challenges—health care,

energy, education, and others—that we can no longer afford to ignore.

But I want to be very clear, if the message was not effectively delivered by the three previous speakers: We cannot, and will not, sustain deficits like these without end. Contrary to the prevailing wisdom in Washington these past few years, we cannot simply spend as we please and defer the consequences to the next budget, the next administration, or the next generation.

We are paying the price for these deficits right now. In 2008 alone, we paid $250 billion in interest on our debt, 1 in every 10 taxpayer dollars. That is more than three times what we spent on education that year, more than seven times what we spent on VA health care.

So if we confront this crisis without also confronting the deficits that helped cause it, we risk sinking into another crisis down the road as our interest payments rise, our obligations come due, confidence in our economy erodes, and our children and our grandchildren are unable to pursue their dreams because they're saddled with our debts.

And that's why today I'm pledging to cut the deficit we inherited by half by the end of my first term in office. Now, this will not be easy. It will require us to make difficult decisions and face challenges we've long neglected. But I refuse to leave our children with a debt that they cannot repay, and that means taking responsibility right now, in this administration, for getting our spending under control.

We'll start by being honest with ourselves about the magnitude of our deficits. For too long, our budget process in Washington has been an exercise in deception, a series of accounting tricks to hide the extent of our spending and the shortfalls in our revenue and hope that the American people won't notice: budgeting certain expenditures for just 1 year, when we know we'll incur them every year for 5 or 10; budgeting zero dollars for the Iraq war—zero—for future years, even when we knew the war would continue; budgeting no money for natural disasters, as if we would ever go 12 months without a single flood, fire, hurricane, or earthquake.

We do ourselves no favors by hiding the truth about what we spend. In order to address our fiscal crisis, we're going to have to be candid about its scope. And that's why the budget I will introduce later this week will look ahead 10 years and will include a full and honest accounting of the money we plan to spend and the deficits we will likely incur.

To start reducing these deficits, I've committed to going through our budget line by line to root out waste and inefficiency, a process that Peter and our administration, our team, has already begun. And I'll soon be instructing each member of my Cabinet to go through every item in their budgets as well. And already we've seen how much money we can save, just in the last 30 days.

Take one example: The Department of Agriculture has moved some of its training programs online, saving an estimated $1.3 million a year. They're modernizing their financial management system, saving an estimated $17.5 million. They're saving tens of thousands of dollars by cutting back on conferences and travel and other small expenses that add up over time.

So we will replicate these efforts throughout the Federal Government, eliminating programs that don't work to make room for ones that do and making the ones that we keep work better. We'll end the payments to agribusiness that don't need them and eliminate the no-bid contracts that have wasted billions in Iraq. We'll end the tax breaks for companies shipping jobs overseas, and we'll stop the fraud and abuse in our Medicare program.

And we will reinstate the pay-as-you-go rule that we followed during the 1990s, the rule that helped us start this new century with a $236 billion surplus. In recent years, we've strayed from this rule, and the results speak for themselves. The pay-go approach is based on a very simple concept: You don't spend what you don't have. So if we want to spend, we'll need to find somewhere else to cut. This is the rule that families across this country follow every single day, and there's no reason why their Government shouldn't do the same.

Now, I want to be very clear: While we are making important progress towards fiscal

responsibility this year in this budget, this is just the beginning. In the coming years, we'll be forced to make more tough choices and do much more to address our long-term challenges, from the rising cost of health care that Peter described, which is the single most pressing fiscal challenge we face by far, to the long-term solvency of Social Security.

In the end, however, if we want to rebuild our economy and restore discipline and honesty to our budget, we will need to change the way we do business here in Washington. We're not going to be able to fall back into the same old habits and make the same inexcusable mistakes: the repeated failure to act as our economy spiraled deeper into crisis; the casual dishonesty of hiding irresponsible spending with clever accounting tricks; the costly overruns, the fraud and abuse, the endless excuses. This is exactly what the American people rejected when they went to the polls.

They sent us here to usher in a new era of responsibility in Washington, to start living within our means again and being straight with them about where their tax dollars are going, and empowering them with the information they need to hold all of us, their representatives, accountable.

So that's why I have called this summit today and why I have invited leaders from both sides of the aisle, because we all have a role to play in this work. I believe it is time for a frank conversation about the fiscal challenges we face. They're challenges that concern every single one of us, no matter where we are on this political spectrum.

So today I want to—I hope that all of you will start talking with each other and exchanging ideas. I want you to question each other, challenge each other, question me and my team, challenge us, and work together not just to identify problems, but to identify solutions.

And that's the purpose of the breakout sessions that are starting right now. I know that each of you bring a wealth of experience and expertise on a broad range of topics. I appreciate your willingness to participate in these sessions. I expect that this process will be engaging and productive, and I look forward to hearing the results when you report back later this afternoon.

So thank you very much, all of you, for participating.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:03 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mark Zandi, chief economist and cofounder, Moody's Economy.com; Robert Greenstein, founder and executive director, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities; Peter R. Orszag, Director, Office of Management and Budget; Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi; Sens. Harry Reid, Richard J. Durbin, Addison M. "Mitch" McConnell; and Rep. John A. Boehner. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden.

Remarks and a Discussion at the Closing Session of the Fiscal Responsibility Summit

February 23, 2009

The President. Thank you everybody. Thank you. Please have a seat. Well, this says something—I don't know what—about all of you, that I hear you really enjoyed this fiscal responsibility summit. [*Laughter*] I mean, I—it's a sign of a—something. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Illness.

The President. Illness, right. I understand you guys had great breakout sessions, and my advisers just filled me in on some of the issues that came up. I want to just provide a few opening remarks, and then I'm—we'll just open it up for questions and comments.

The idea here was to bring everybody together, because it's been a long time since we had this conversation. And over the last 8 years, I think we've seen a continued deterioration in the Government's balance sheets.

My sense is that despite partisan differences, despite regional differences, and different

priorities, everybody is concerned about the legacy we're leaving to our children. And the hope was—is that if we had a forum like this to start talking about these issues that it would turn out that there are real opportunities for progress—there are going to be some areas where we can't make progress—but that we have more in common that we expect. And I appreciate that while we may have different opinions, there's a renewed willingness to put some concrete ideas on the table, even on those issues that are politically tough, and that's real progress.

A couple of takeaways that my staff indicated to me. There was a healthy debate on Social Security, but also a healthy consensus among some participants, including Congressmen Boehner and Hoyer as well as Senator Graham and Senator Durbin, that this was a moment to work in a bipartisan way to make progress on ensuring Americans' retirement security. And I think one of the things we want to do is to figure out how do we capture that momentum.

Over the longer run, putting America on a sustainable fiscal course will require addressing health care. That seemed to be an issue that there was a lot of consensus around. Many of you said what I believe, that the biggest source of our deficits is the rising cost of health care. It's a challenge that impacts businesses, workers, and families alike. And voices as varied as Senator Alexander, Douglas Holtz-Eakin to Senator Baucus and Senator Dodd and Representative Waxman all agreed to try to tackle health care this year, which I think that offers extraordinary promise, although peril as well.

The tax reform discussion underscored clear agreement that the tax process has to be simplified for all Americans. The task force on the budget process yielded some unanimous agreement that the existing process wasn't working. The question is whether we'll have the commitment and discipline to do what we know needs to be done and whether we need to create some new mechanisms to deal with these challenges.

Now, I want to make sure that the conversation doesn't end when we go home today. We've got a lot of hard choices to make. We need to build off this afternoon's conversation and work together to forge a consensus.

So one of the things that I'm hoping to do is that my team, each of whom were taking copious notes during the course of these respective breakout sessions, will issue a report or a summary of the conversation. It will be distributed to each of the participants in those respective discussions. We will then ask for concrete ideas, either about substance or process, and we will ask that you get those back so that we can then issue a final report coming out of this conversation in 30 days.

And we're—I think somebody just dubbed this the "fiscal sustainability project," so that's as good of a name as any. And the idea then is, is that there will be a constant loop between the White House and all of you about how we should move forward on this, and hopefully this will start breaking down into some concrete takeaways and tasks. Some of the recommendations that have been made are already reflected in the budget that we're proposing. Some new ideas may have arisen that we did not think of and that can be incorporated as the budget process moves forward in Congress.

And so we are very much looking forward to hearing from your ideas, both about process and about substance. And then we will in 30 days time be able to come out with a series of recommendations. In some cases there may be some things that we can do by Executive order that don't require legislation, but there seems to be some consensus—are smart things to do. In other cases, it's going to require a legislative—some legislative decisions, and we're going to collaborate closely with the relevant chairs and committees that have jurisdiction.

So with that, let me just stop. And what I want to do is just get some comments. A lot of you have been working hard on this, but I'm going to use my Presidential prerogative and call on a couple of people first, and then if other people have comments that they want to offer, please raise your hands.

And I'm going to start with John McCain because—he and I had some good debates about these issues. [*Laughter*] But—and I mean what I say here, I think John has also

been extraordinarily consistent and sincere about these issues, and I want to see if you—John, you've got some thoughts about where we need to go and some priority areas. I know you were in procurement, for example, which is an area I know we would like to work on together with you.

Defense Department

Senator John McCain. Well, thank you, Mr. President. And thank you for doing this; I think it's very important. And the particular breakout session that we had our—Secretary of Homeland Security was our leader. And so we got—I think it was a very fruitful discussion.

Just one area that I wanted to mention that I think consumed a lot of our conversation on procurement was the issue of cost overruns in the Defense Department. We all know how large the defense budget is. We all know that the cost overruns—your helicopter is now going to cost as much as Air Force One. I don't think that there's any more graphic demonstration of how good ideas have cost taxpayers an enormous amount of money.

So we will—and I know that you've already made plans to try to curb some of the excesses in procurement. We really have to do that. We're going to have to pay for Afghanistan, as you well know, and we're not done in Iraq. But most importantly, we have to make some tough decisions—you, Mr. President, have to make some tough decisions about not only what we procure, but how we procure it.

And I thank you for the opportunity and sharing your thoughts with a lot of very smart people.

The President. Well, John, let me—this is going to be one of our highest priorities. By the way, I've already talked to Gates about a thorough review of the helicopter situation. The helicopter I have now seems perfectly adequate to me. [*Laughter*] Of course, I've never had a helicopter before. So—[*laughter*]—maybe I've been deprived and I didn't know it. [*Laughter*]

But I think it is a—an example of the procurement process gone amuck. And we're going to have to fix it. Our hope is, is that you, Senator Levin, and others can really take some leadership on this.

And one of the promising things is I think Secretary Gates shares our concern, and he recognizes that simply adding more and more does not necessarily mean better and better or safer and more secure. Those two things are not—they don't always move in parallel tracks, and we've got to think that through.

Steny, you participated in the Social Security panel.

Social Security

Representative Steny H. Hoyer. First off, I think that the Social Security section was a very, very productive section. I think there was some honest—as you would think—disagreements, but as was indicated earlier, John Boehner, myself, Dick Durbin, Lindsey Thomas——

The President. Lindsey Graham, sir. I don't know about Lindsey Thomas, but I know Lindsey Graham. [*Laughter*]

Rep. Hoyer. Lindsey Graham—[*laughter*]—South Carolina is not Louisiana, right? I got you. That'll work—[*laughter*]—but Lindsey Graham. Everybody gave some very solid recommendations. And I think there was in fact a consensus, an understanding of the different perspectives and ways and means to get to an objective was essentially that getting to an objective serves a number of purposes. Obviously, from a fiscal standpoint it served a purpose, but also in giving both seniors and young people confidence that benefits would be available to them in the short term, and from a young people's standpoint, in the long term.

The President. Sir, thank you.

Rep. Hoyer. If I can——

The President. Please.

Rep. Hoyer. I think your comment that follow-through is going to be essential—if we come together and have a group discussion with—[*inaudible*]—a lot of bright people who have some very good information from various, different interest groups who represent large constituencies, if it just stops there, then it won't have been as useful as you want it to be and as the country wants it to be.

The President. Good. Speaking of bright people with large constituencies—Bill Novelli. Where's Bill? Is he still here? There you are.

I know you participated in the health care panel. Bill, your thoughts on Medicare and the interest of your membership in getting an equitable solution to what is an unsustainable situation.

Health Care

William D. Novelli. The whole entitlement thing is as you characterized it. We have a real sustainability problem. But I think you put the right frame on this, Mr. President, by saying that the path to sustainability is health care reform. And our group, I think, had tremendously good ideas. Most of the policy ideas that we all know and share were on the table today.

There's a lot of hard policy work that's going to have to go on, but I think we have some momentum. But I think one of the things that also came out of the session was we need to engage the American people. Yes, we have to think of them as patients, we have to think of them as insured or uninsured, but we also have to think of them as taxpayers and as voters. They need to understand what the tradeoffs are—what they might lose, what they might gain. We can all do that, but nobody could do it as well as you can. You've got the bully pulpit to really carry your message to the public.

The President. All right, I appreciate that. This is the only area where we had done a little prejudging of what needs to be done. We have scheduled a health care summit next week. It's not that I've got summititis here—[*laughter*]—but rather, it's actually exactly the point that you're making, Bill, which is everybody here understands a lot of the tradeoffs involved in health care, and that there are no perfect solutions.

But in the sound bite, political culture that we got, it's very hard to communicate that, and we think that it's very important to have some forums. And I talked about this during—way back in the primary campaign, that there is a process that the public can listen to about what these tradeoffs are, because I think that some of us get on our high horse and say we've got the answer to health care. Well, it turns out that, you know, there are costs involved on the front end even if the benefits accrue in the out years. There are situations in terms of people, if they've got health insurance, sort of liking what they've got now; they just want it for cheaper. There are issues in terms of providers and them feeling like they're getting squeezed.

And so making sure that all that stuff is surfaced in public and we're educating the public on some of these issues can be very important if we're going to make progress, because, you know, some of these things will ultimately involve some tough decisions and some tough votes.

So budget process—Kent, you participated, and I want to get both your views and John Spratt's views on—I don't know if John is still here; there he is—on budget process and how you think we're going to need to clean this stuff up.

Federal Budget

Senator Kent Conrad. Well, first of all, thank you for doing this. I thought it was a terrific start in the White House. I think Bob Greenstein said it very well when he talked about us being on an unsustainable course; the debt being the threat, because we've doubled the debt in the last 8 years, tripled foreign holdings of the debt. Last year, when we went out to finance this debt, 68 percent came from foreign entities, so that creates a vulnerability.

How do we address it? That is the $64,000 question. And that's what we addressed in our group. I think it's fair to say there were different views. Many of us believe it's going to take some special process to bring all of the players together to write a plan so that we see the tradeoffs between what's available for health care reform, which without question is the 800-pound gorilla, Social Security, which also has to be addressed for the long term, and revenue.

Revenue is the thing almost nobody wants to talk about, but I think if we're going to be honest with each other, we better recognize that is part of the solution as well. And it's very hard to know what you are going to do with Medicare unless you know what revenue is going to be; very hard to know what you're going to do with Social Security without knowing

what revenue is going to be. So somehow we've got to come together around a plan, and of course, that depends on Presidential leadership, which you certainly provided here today.

The President. All right. Thank you.

John.

Representative John M. Spratt, Jr. I got a bum leg, Mr. President; you'll have to excuse me, sir. Thank you for holding this.

I participated in the 1997 balanced budget negotiations. That was the last time we were at the White House to discuss in common, Democrats and Republicans, some common ground that we could both take up—[*inaudible*]—issues. Thank you for doing this again; this is only the beginning.

I would agree with Kent that we agree we need a special process. We didn't come to final agreement on exactly what that process would be—would it be a task force or a steering committee within the Congress or a commission from without Congress. That's still an issue to be resolved, but I don't think it's an issue we can't resolve. And we moved towards discussion of some sort of hybrid of the two.

Clearly that's important. I think everyone in that room would agree that if we're to succeed at what we're setting out to do, we need a special process that we can—by which we can accomplish it. We need to force the issue. We need have some assurance that whatever we agree upon can indeed be brought to the floor of each House and brought to a vote.

Many of us think it's too draconian to compare this to the BRAC process where you get an up or down vote, no amendments. But there needs to be some sort of fast track and special procedure to ensure that whatever the entities come up with it will be viewed and considered.

The President. Okay. Thank you, John.

Since I see her right—sitting right next to you, Susan, you were in the procurement task force?

Federal Contracts

Senator Susan M. Collins. Yes.

The President. Did you have any thoughts on——

Sen. Collins. Yes. If you look across the Federal Government, there are problems in IT contracts no matter where you look. And one recommendation that our group talked about is establishing some kind of Nunn-McCurdy law to apply to IT contracts.

In general, we also talked about the need for more competition in contracts, for justification, for cost-plus contracts. My favorite pet peeve is we don't have enough skilled contracting officers. We've had an enormous increase in the volume of contracts at a time when the acquisition workforce has actually declined by 22 percent. So those were some of the issues that we discussed in addition to what Senator McCain said.

The President. Charlie, you're right here in front. Kent talked about revenue; you were participating in the tax reform panel.

Taxes

Representative Charles B. Rangel. First let me thank you for bringing us together. The Secretary of Treasury provided a lot of leadership, and making certain that we recognize how important it was to the country and the world that we do something. The corporate part of the tax structure, people thought it was relatively easy to dramatically reduce the rates that make us internationally competitive. The problems, of course, was the different views they have in how you handle the individual rates.

I don't think there's any committee in the House that would be more anxious to bring forth a product, whether it's in health or tax reform or Social Security, to bring forth something in a bipartisan way. And I think this is a dramatic first step to see where we're going. As I said, I don't want to seem to be corny, but it would appear as though that if America recognized the crisis, that they're not looking for a Democratic or Republican solution. And in order for us to be politically successful, they're going have to believe that we've done it in a bipartisan way.

So I think this initiative is a strong first step. I only hope at the end of the day we can come out, maybe not in total agreement, but certainly in a bipartisan way.

The President. Just a quick thought on taxes, Charlie. My instinct is, is that you're absolutely right that the individual tax rate is always the

hardest thing. There's some philosophical differences between the parties on this, and I understand that.

On the corporate side, I at least have always maintained that if we try to think in the same ways that we thought about it in 1986, and if you closed loopholes, you could actually lower rates.

Rep. Rangel. No question about it.

The President. And that's an area where there should be the potential for some bipartisan agreement, because I think, on the books, the rates in the United States are high. In practice, depending on who it is that you can—what kind of accountant you can hire, they're not so high. And that's an area where we can work on. Simplification, same thing—I don't think there's anybody out here who thinks that we are making it customer-friendly for the taxpayer. And that's an area where we can make some great progress.

Rep. Rangel. Well, if you're looking for a fight and a partisan fight, any loophole you close is a tax increase. We have to get over that and make certain that the vast majority of businesses recognize it's in their best interest to do the right thing as relates to those who've taken unfair advantage of the Government.

The President. Well, you were here in '86, it's been done before. We might be able to get it done this time.

Rep. Rangel. Well, under your leadership, I'm looking forward to it. [*Laughter*]

The President. Eric, you got some thoughts?

Economic Stabilization

Representative Eric Cantor. Mr. President, I too want to thank you very much for having us. It's a great opportunity, I think, for us to really come together on some of these very, very big issues.

You said before when we were in discussions on the stimulus debate that we're going to have some very tough choices to make. And we look forward to your address tomorrow night and working through some of these very big issues, as well as trying to address what's on Secretary Geithner's plate in the immediate, as far as the bank fix, the housing fix, and others. Thank you.

The President. Good. Thanks.

Max, you were on the health care panel, but obviously, you've got jurisdiction over everything. [*Laughter*] I know how the Finance Committee works. [*Laughter*]

Health Care/Bipartisanship in Government

Senator Max S. Baucus. Well, Mr. President, first, all of us are enormously grateful for what you're doing here, not on the specific issues, but also our fiscal problems. It needs to be done, and we deeply appreciate your taking this on together.

I'd like to just make a little bit of a pitch, if you will, on health care reform. I think it's very symbolic and very interesting that the first person you called upon was John McCain. And that's the approach I think we need to take here generally and specifically with health care reform. You had a different view during the campaign on health care reform; John McCain had a different view during the campaign on health care reform. Here's the opportunity for us to come up with something that's uniquely American, it's public and private. And I do believe, if we just keep that working-together approach and keep at it—all opinions, et cetera—and take advantage of this opportunity where the stars are now aligned as to health care, and we'll get it done.

But I was very pleased that you called on John first, because that—I think it's the tone that we have to take here to make sure we're working together. Thank you.

The President. Thank you, Max.

Jim, you got any thoughts on this?

Representative James E. Clyburn. Well, I just wanted to thank you very much, Mr. President, for doing this. I was thinking when you called on Senator McCain—I came to this Congress after working for four Governors, two Democrats and two Republicans. It is remarkable the things we were able to do in South Carolina with Jim Edwards, as many of you may remember, Carroll Campbell, John West, Dick Riley, simply because he started thinking about what we needed to do for the people of our great State.

I think that what we're doing here today provides a framework for us to really get some

things done for the people of our great Nation. And we can do this. And I'm so pleased that you've set this tone here today. And I think—[*inaudible*].

The President. Mike, were you in the health care panel? Do you want to just add some thoughts?

Senator Michael B. Enzi. Thank you, Mr. President. And I too appreciate the effort to bring these people together. We had both a number of associations as well as the House and Senate. And one of the things I want to emphasize was the deed that Senator Baucus pointed out to be bipartisan in the start—at the beginning of the process rather than at the end of the process. To do that—and we do have a task force set up in the Senate that's under—Baucus's heading up, that has had several meetings already that brought out the issues that—all of the issues to be put on the table. And the words not to use, because there are some words that send us right into the weeds in debate——

The President. Socialized medicine. [*Laughter*] Is that one of them?

Sen. Enzi. They're words from both sides of the aisle. [*Laughter*]

Could we not get into the debate that sends us in the weeds and stay up on the bigger things and get the principals together, and then talk to the stakeholders, and then take it through the regular Senate process. Is it possible to do that sort of thing? Senator Kennedy and I and Senators Baucus and Grassley were in the pensions debate, and that took an hour of time on the floor plus two amendments to get that result, because it went through that very difficult process. So I appreciate you including that.

The President. Did we have some representatives from the Chamber or business participating?

John Castellani. Mr. President, I'm John Castellani from Business Roundtable. We saw each other the other day.

I was in the health care discussion. And the one thing that we all agreed on was that it is absolutely imperative for both fiscal reasons, as well as personal reasons and competitive reasons, to move forward on health care. We simply cannot afford as a nation, and we certainly cannot afford as businesses, to maintain the status quo, because it is unsustainable.

And I think, as Bill pointed out and has certainly been pointed out by the people that were participating in it, all the Senators and Members, there are a lot of good ideas out there. The time is now to put those good ideas down on a piece of legislation and move forward so we have something that delivers quality health care to everybody in this country in a way that everybody can afford.

The President. Business leadership I think is going to be critical. Andy Stern is sitting right to next to you. Andy, you've been working on this front for a long time. You got some thoughts?

Andy Stern. I mean, I just want to say that I am sitting next to John, because he and I and Bill Novelli and others really have built a relationship over a long period of time, because we don't see this as a Democratic problem or a Republican problem; it's just an American problem. And it's time to solve it. And Lee, Scott, and I and business and labor and others can come together outside the Congress. It really is time for the Congress to get this job done, because the American people need it.

The President. Nice scarf, by the way. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Stern. Thanks.

The President. David Walker. Where's David at?

Federal Budget

David Walker. Mr. President, it's an honor to be here. Thank you for your leadership.

You touched in your remarks on our balance sheet. As a former Comptroller General of the United States I can tell you we're $11 trillion in the hole on the balance sheet. And the problem is not the balance sheet, it's off balance sheet, $45 trillion in unfunded obligations.

You mentioned in January about the need to achieve a grand bargain involving budget process, Social Security, taxes, health care reform. You are 110 percent right; we need to do that. The question is, how do we do it? Candidly, I think it's going to take some type of an extraordinary process that engages the American people, that provides for fast-track consideration.

And with your leadership, that can happen. But that's what it's going to take, Mr. President.

The President. Okay. Well, I appreciate that. And again, when we distribute the notes coming out of these task forces, I want to make sure that people are responding, both in terms of substance, but also in terms of process, because we're going to need both in order to make some progress on this.

Federal Workforce and Retirement

Audience member. Mr. President, it was kind of a surprise in the procurement group that was together, we had almost universal recognition that over the last decade or so, we've overdone, in some cases, outsourcing of critical Federal requirements, and that means that in many cases we spend more to hire a contractor or a non-Federal worker than we would pay to invest in Federal workers.

And so there was universal—Republican, Democrat, House and Senate, even—[*laughter*]——

The President. Nice shot. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. ——that during this administration we need to assess where we can re-federalize some parts of the workforce, particularly when it came to people who do get procurement and oversee the procurement.

Also, that we do have a system which is disadvantageous to someone remaining in the Federal workforce. Our retirement system pays you less and less the longer you stay. Yours is flat, by the way, one day when you get your retirement. [*Laughter*] But the accrual system in fact causes people to leave the Federal workforce to double-dip, rather than being encouraged, either during their working time or if we ask them to stay on past their retirement.

So those areas were areas I think we had good common—your folks—Janet took a lot of notes, so I think you're going to see that we have areas where our committees could work with you to make those changes. And they are legislative changes that could save us money.

The President. Which I think would be terrific. I mean, that's the kind of stuff—it's not sexy, but it ends up, over time, making enormous progress.

Anybody else that just wants to—go ahead.

Health Care

Audience member. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President. I just want to bring up that in the health care, we talked a lot about individuals and the systems of health care that we have and looking for places that we can cut. But as a community organizer, I know that you know that investing in the community—we look at the models across the world, and the models in our country where health care prevails to be the strongest and where people live the longest, it's because they have a community that has—of support and a community-wide—of health care.

And I think if we look at access issues for those from Native American communities, like mine, or rural America or other places that create that access with community support and have the right mid-level service providers and others that can reach to the smaller communities across America——

The President. That's important. Yes, go ahead.

Bipartisanship in Government

Representative Joe L. Barton. Mr. President, thank you for having us here at the White House. I'm going to take a little bit different approach. Senator Baucus mentioned it and Chairman Rangel mentioned it, the need for bipartisanship. I think the House Republicans have shown that when we're not included in the decisionmaking, we're disinclined to sign off on the solution.

And it's very easy in the House—it's set up to get things done quickly if the majority is united—to forget about the minority. But if you really want consensus, I would encourage you to encourage the Speaker to have a true open process. This is a good first step, but if this is all we do, it's a sterile step.

On the other hand, if you really follow up and include everybody in the process, you're more than likely to get a solution that everybody signs off on. And I have said or

stood behind every President since Reagan in this room at bill signing ceremonies that were the result of consensus. So I commend you for doing this.

The President. Well, Joe, I think you're making an important point. And, you know, my response, first of all is, I'm not in Congress, so I don't want to interject myself too much into congressional politics.

Rep. Barton. We'd love you to interject yourself.

The President. But I do want to make this point, and I think it's important: On the one hand, the majority has to be inclusive; on the other hand, the minority has to be constructive.

And so to the extent that on many of these issues we are able to break out of sort of the rigid day-to-day politics and think long term, then what you should see, I think, is the majority saying, what are your ideas? The minority has got to then come up with those ideas and not just want to blow the thing up. And I think that on some of these issues, we're going to have some very real differences and, you know, presumably the majority will prevail unless the minority can block it. But you're just going to have different philosophical approaches to some of these problems.

But on the issue that was just raised here on procurement, on the issues—some of the issues surrounding health care, the way it cuts isn't even going to be Democratic/Republican. It's going to be—you know, there may be regional differences; there may be a whole host of other differences. And if that's—if we can stay focused on solving problems, then I will do what I can, through my good offices, to encourage the kind of cooperation you're encouraging.

Rep. Barton. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Way back there, and then I'll—we'll go right here to Tom, and then probably that's going to be it, because I think I'm already over time.

Go ahead.

Social Security

Heidi Hartmann. Thank you, Mr. President. Heidi Hartmann, Institute for Women's Policy Research. I just wanted to point out that in the Social Security group, I think there was a fair amount of concession that, given the demographic trends, we're actually going to need to do some benefit increases for those at the bottom, where we may see poverty increase because we're going to have more older unmarried women, more older minority people. And there was even, I think, a fair amount of consensus that, therefore, we will need to see revenue increases going into the system. So I thought there was a surprising amount of consensus in the Social Security group.

The President. Okay, good.

Tom.

Bipartisanship in Government

Senator Thomas R. Carper. To tack on what a bunch of others have said, thanks very, very much for bringing us together.

A couple of people have said to me, coming into the meeting, that why is the President continuing to reach out to the minority? And their—I think the answer lies in part—a couple weeks ago, the minister in our church gave a sermon that was based on the parable of the sower—the sower of the seeds. You may recall that in your—some of the seeds were sown in stony ground and rough ground and some of the seeds were sown in places that had thorns, some of the seeds were sown in the—in shallow soil and nothing much came out of it. But some of the seeds were sown in fertile soil and multiplied a hundredfold.

I urge you to continue to reach out not just to Democrats in the House and Senate, but to continue to reach out to Republicans in both Chambers, as well, because some of that will fall in fertile soil. And when it does, the minority has a responsibility, as you suggest——

The President. Well, I will certainly do that, Tom, because I'm just a glutton for punishment. [*Laughter*] I'm going to keep on talking to Eric Cantor. Some day, sooner or later, he is going to say, "Boy, Obama had a good idea." [*Laughter*] It's going to happen. You watch, you watch. [*Laughter*]

Well, look, just in closing, again, the sooner everybody can respond to our report coming out of each of these groups, the sooner then we can circulate a summary of everything that happened, and then start speaking with you

individually and in groups about moving the process forward.

One last point I want to make, just because I think that from the press perspective, there—I was reading some of the newspapers today, and there was this sense of a—that maybe we were doing a pivot because we had just moved forward on the recovery package, now we're talking about fiscal responsibility; how did those two things match up?

I just want to be very clear about this. I've said it to the Governors this morning, and I've said it to my staff in the past: We chose to move forward on a recovery package because there was a strong sense among the vast majority of economists that if we did not try to fill a $1 trillion-a-year hole in demand, because of the drastic pulling back of businesses and consumers, that the recession would get worse, unemployment would increase, and as a consequence, tax revenues would go down and the long-term deficit and debt projections would be even higher. That was the basis for the decision.

It was not ideologically driven. I have no interest in making Government bigger for the sake of it. I've got more than enough on my plate, as Lindsey knows, between Afghanistan and Iraq and issues of terrorism, that if the private sector was just humming along and we could just make Government more efficient and not have to worry about this financial crisis, I would love that. But that's not the circumstance we find ourselves in, so I made the best judgment about the need for us to move forward on a recovery package.

There were some differences, significant differences between the parties about this. I would suggest that if you look at the differences, they amounted to maybe 10, maybe 15 percent of the total package. There wasn't a lot of argument about countercyclical payments to States to make sure that people had extended unemployment insurance or food stamps. There wasn't a lot of disagreement about some of the infrastructure that needs to be repaired, and there wasn't a lot of disagreement on the tax cut front; 15–20 percent of it there were some disagreements about.

But the reason I make this point is that if we're going to be successful moving forward, it's important for us to distinguish between legitimate policy differences and our politics. And the reason that there is no contradiction, from my perspective, in doing the recovery package first, but now focusing on the medium and long term, is because our hope is that this economy starts recovering. We will have taken a hit, in terms of our debt and our deficit. But as Bob Greenstein said, the recovery package will account for about one-tenth of 1 percent of our long-term debt. The real problems are the structural deficits and the structural debt that we've been accumulating and all of us are complicit in.

So we've got to get that taken care of. We would have had to take—get it taken care of whether or not there was a recession; this just underscores the urgency of it. And I'm hopeful that we move forward in that spirit in the days and weeks and months to come.

So thank you, everybody. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:04 p.m. in Room 450 at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to economist Douglas J. Holtz-Eakin; William D. Novelli, chief executive officer, American Association of Retired Persons; John J. Castellani, president, Business Roundtable; Andy Stern, president, Service Employees International Union; David Walker, president and chief executive officer, Peter G. Peterson Foundation; and Robert Greenstein, founder and executive director, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Sen. McCain referred to Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano. Rep. Rangel referred to Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Taro Aso of Japan and an Exchange With Reporters
February 24, 2009

President Obama. Well, I would just like to say welcome to the Prime Minister. Obviously, the friendship between the United States and Japan is extraordinarily important to our country. It is for that reason that the Prime Minister is the first foreign dignitary to visit me here in the Oval Office. I think it's a testimony to the strong partnership between the United States and Japan.

The alliance that we have is the cornerstone of security in East Asia. It's one that my administration wants to strengthen. We think that we have an opportunity to work together not only on issues related to the Pacific rim but throughout the world, and Japan has been a great partner on issues ranging from climate change to Afghanistan. We're going to have a very busy session, and I'm very grateful that the Prime Minister agreed to come, and I'm looking forward to a very constructive dialog.

Prime Minister Aso. Do I have to say something? Well, first of all, thank you very much for inviting a foreign official, a foreign guest, to the White House. On behalf of not only Japan but as a nation, we are very honored to be here as the first of foreign guests.

Nowadays there are so many issues we will have to fight against, and we are the number one and second biggest economies of the world; we will have to work together, hand in hand. And I think we are the only two nations which can offer enough to solve those very critical, vital issue of the world. I do hope our cooperation will help for the future generation of the world.

President Obama. All right. Thank you, guys.

The President's Meeting With Prime Minister Aso

Q. Why Japan?

President Obama. It's a great partner, and as I said, a cornerstone of security as well as one of our strongest economic partners. Thank you very much, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:35 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress
February 24, 2009

Madam Speaker, Mr. Vice President, Members of Congress, the First Lady of the United States—she's around here somewhere: I have come here tonight not only to address the distinguished men and women in this great Chamber, but to speak frankly and directly to the men and women who sent us here.

I know that for many Americans watching right now, the state of our economy is a concern that rises above all others, and rightly so. If you haven't been personally affected by this recession, you probably know someone who has: a friend, a neighbor, a member of your family. You don't need to hear another list of statistics to know that our economy is in crisis, because you live it every day. It's the worry you wake up with and the source of sleepless nights. It's the job you thought you'd retire from but now have lost, the business you built your dreams upon that's now hanging by a thread, the college acceptance letter your child had to put back in the envelope. The impact of this recession is real, and it is everywhere.

But while our economy may be weakened and our confidence shaken, though we are living through difficult and uncertain times, tonight I want every American to know this: We will rebuild, we will recover, and the United States of America will emerge stronger than before.

The weight of this crisis will not determine the destiny of this Nation. The answers to our problems don't lie beyond our reach. They exist in our laboratories and our universities, in our fields and our factories, in the imaginations of our entrepreneurs and the pride of the hardest

working people on Earth. Those qualities that have made America the greatest force of progress and prosperity in human history, we still possess in ample measure. What is required now is for this country to pull together, confront boldly the challenges we face, and take responsibility for our future once more.

Now, if we're honest with ourselves, we'll admit that for too long, we have not always met these responsibilities as a Government or as a people. I say this not to lay blame or to look backwards, but because it is only by understanding how we arrived at this moment that we'll be able to lift ourselves out of this predicament.

The fact is, our economy did not fall into decline overnight, nor did all of our problems begin when the housing market collapsed or the stock market sank. We have known for decades that our survival depends on finding new sources of energy, yet we import more oil today than ever before. The cost of health care eats up more and more of our savings each year, yet we keep delaying reform. Our children will compete for jobs in a global economy that too many of our schools do not prepare them for. And though all these challenges went unsolved, we still managed to spend more money and pile up more debt, both as individuals and through our Government, than ever before.

In other words, we have lived through an era where too often short-term gains were prized over long-term prosperity, where we failed to look beyond the next payment, the next quarter, or the next election. A surplus became an excuse to transfer wealth to the wealthy instead of an opportunity to invest in our future. Regulations were gutted for the sake of a quick profit at the expense of a healthy market. People bought homes they knew they couldn't afford from banks and lenders who pushed those bad loans anyway. And all the while, critical debates and difficult decisions were put off for some other time, on some other day. Well, that day of reckoning has arrived, and the time to take charge of our future is here.

Now is the time to act boldly and wisely to not only revive this economy, but to build a new foundation for lasting prosperity. Now is the time to jump-start job creation, restart lending, and invest in areas like energy, health care, and education that will grow our economy, even as we make hard choices to bring our deficit down. That is what my economic agenda is designed to do, and that is what I'd like to talk to you about tonight. It's an agenda that begins with jobs.

As soon as I took office, I asked this Congress to send me a recovery plan by President's Day that would put people back to work and put money in their pockets, not because I believe in bigger Government—I don't—not because I'm not mindful of the massive debt we've inherited—I am. I called for action because the failure to do so would have cost more jobs and caused more hardship. In fact, a failure to act would have worsened our long-term deficit by assuring weak economic growth for years. And that's why I pushed for quick action. And tonight I am grateful that this Congress delivered and pleased to say that the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act is now law.

Over the next 2 years, this plan will save or create 3.5 million jobs. More than 90 percent of these jobs will be in the private sector: jobs rebuilding our roads and bridges, constructing wind turbines and solar panels, laying broadband and expanding mass transit.

Because of this plan, there are teachers who can now keep their jobs and educate our kids, health care professionals can continue caring for our sick. There are 57 police officers who are still on the streets of Minneapolis tonight because this plan prevented the layoffs their department was about to make. Because of this plan, 95 percent of working households in America will receive a tax cut; a tax cut that you will see in your paychecks beginning on April 1st. Because of this plan, families who are struggling to pay tuition costs will receive a $2,500 tax credit for all 4 years of college, and Americans who have lost their jobs in this recession will be able to receive extended unemployment benefits and continued health care coverage to help them weather this storm.

Now, I know there are some in this Chamber and watching at home who are skeptical of

whether this plan will work, and I understand that skepticism. Here in Washington, we've all seen how quickly good intentions can turn into broken promises and wasteful spending. And with a plan of this scale comes enormous responsibility to get it right.

And that's why I've asked Vice President Biden to lead a tough, unprecedented oversight effort; because nobody messes with Joe. I—am I right? They don't mess with him. I have told each of my Cabinet, as well as mayors and Governors across the country, that they will be held accountable by me and the American people for every dollar they spend. I've appointed a proven and aggressive Inspector General to ferret out any and all cases of waste and fraud. And we have created a new web site called recovery.gov, so that every American can find out how and where their money is being spent.

So the recovery plan we passed is the first step in getting our economy back on track. But it is just the first step. Because even if we manage this plan flawlessly, there will be no real recovery unless we clean up the credit crisis that has severely weakened our financial system.

I want to speak plainly and candidly about this issue tonight, because every American should know that it directly affects you and your family's well-being. You should also know that the money you've deposited in banks across the country is safe, your insurance is secure, you can rely on the continued operation of our financial system. That's not the source of concern. The concern is that if we do not restart lending in this country, our recovery will be choked off before it even begins.

You see, the flow of credit is the lifeblood of our economy. The ability to get a loan is how you finance the purchase of everything from a home to a car to a college education, how stores stock their shelves, farms buy equipment, and businesses make payroll.

But credit has stopped flowing the way it should. Too many bad loans from the housing crisis have made their way onto the books of too many banks. And with so much debt and so little confidence, these banks are now fearful of lending out any more money to households, to businesses, or even to each other. And when there is no lending, families can't afford to buy homes or cars, so businesses are forced to make layoffs. Our economy suffers even more, and credit dries up even further. That is why this administration is moving swiftly and aggressively to break this destructive cycle, to restore confidence, and restart lending. And we will do so in several ways.

First, we are creating a new lending fund that represents the largest effort ever to help provide auto loans, college loans, and small-business loans to the consumers and entrepreneurs who keep this economy running.

Second, we have launched a housing plan that will help responsible families facing the threat of foreclosure lower their monthly payments and refinance their mortgages. It's a plan that won't help speculators or that neighbor down the street who bought a house he could never hope to afford, but it will help millions of Americans who are struggling with declining home values; Americans who will now be able to take advantage of the lower interest rates that this plan has already helped to bring about. In fact, the average family who refinances today can save nearly $2,000 per year on their mortgage.

Third, we will act with the full force of the Federal Government to ensure that the major banks that Americans depend on have enough confidence and enough money to lend even in more difficult times. And when we learn that a major bank has serious problems, we will hold accountable those responsible, force the necessary adjustments, provide the support to clean up their balance sheets, and assure the continuity of a strong, viable institution that can serve our people and our economy.

Now, I understand that on any given day, Wall Street may be more comforted by an approach that gives bank bailouts with no strings attached and that holds nobody accountable for their reckless decisions. But such an approach won't solve the problem, and our goal is to quicken the day when we restart lending to the American people and American business and end this crisis once and for all.

And I intend to hold these banks fully accountable for the assistance they receive, and this time, they will have to clearly demonstrate how taxpayer dollars result in more lending for

the American taxpayer. This time, CEOs won't be able to use taxpayer money to pad their paychecks or buy fancy drapes or disappear on a private jet. Those days are over.

Still, this plan will require significant resources from the Federal Government—and, yes, probably more than we've already set aside. But while the cost of action will be great, I can assure you that the cost of inaction will be far greater, for it could result in an economy that sputters along for not months or years, but perhaps a decade. That would be worse for our deficit, worse for business, worse for you, and worse for the next generation. And I refuse to let that happen.

Now, I understand that when the last administration asked this Congress to provide assistance for struggling banks, Democrats and Republicans alike were infuriated by the mismanagement and the results that followed. So were the American taxpayers; so was I. So I know how unpopular it is to be seen as helping banks right now, especially when everyone is suffering in part from their bad decisions. I promise you, I get it.

But I also know that in a time of crisis, we cannot afford to govern out of anger or yield to the politics of the moment. My job—our job is to solve the problem. Our job is to govern with a sense of responsibility. I will not send—I will not spend a single penny for the purpose of rewarding a single Wall Street executive, but I will do whatever it takes to help the small business that can't pay its workers or the family that has saved and still can't get a mortgage. That's what this is about. It's not about helping banks; it's about helping people. [*Applause*]

It's not about helping banks; it's about helping people. Because when credit is available again, that young family can finally buy a new home. And then some company will hire workers to build it. And then those workers will have money to spend. And if they can get a loan too, maybe they'll finally buy that car or open their own business. Investors will return to the market, and American families will see their retirement secured once more. Slowly but surely, confidence will return and our economy will recover.

So I ask this Congress to join me in doing whatever proves necessary, because we cannot consign our Nation to an open-ended recession. And to ensure that a crisis of this magnitude never happens again, I ask Congress to move quickly on legislation that will finally reform our outdated regulatory system. It is time to put in place tough, new, commonsense rules of the road so that our financial market rewards drive and innovation, and punishes shortcuts and abuse.

The recovery plan and the financial stability plan are the immediate steps we're taking to revive our economy in the short term. But the only way to fully restore America's economic strength is to make the long-term investments that will lead to new jobs, new industries, and a renewed ability to compete with the rest of the world. The only way this century will be another American century is if we confront at last the price of our dependence on oil and the high cost of health care, the schools that aren't preparing our children and the mountain of debt they stand to inherit. That is our responsibility.

In the next few days, I will submit a budget to Congress. So often, we've come to view these documents as simply numbers on a page or a laundry list of programs. I see this document differently. I see it as a vision for America, as a blueprint for our future.

My budget does not attempt to solve every problem or address every issue. It reflects the stark reality of what we've inherited, a trillion-dollar deficit, a financial crisis, and a costly recession. Given these realities, everyone in this Chamber, Democrats and Republicans, will have to sacrifice some worthy priorities for which there are no dollars. And that includes me. But that does not mean we can afford to ignore our long-term challenges. I reject the view that says our problems will simply take care of themselves, that says Government has no role in laying the foundation for our common prosperity.

For history tells a different story. History reminds us that at every moment of economic upheaval and transformation, this Nation has responded with bold action and big ideas. In the midst of Civil War, we laid railroad tracks

from one coast to another that spurred commerce and industry. From the turmoil of the Industrial Revolution came a system of public high schools that prepared our citizens for a new age. In the wake of war and depression, the GI bill sent a generation to college and created the largest middle class in history. And a twilight struggle for freedom led to a nation of highways, an American on the Moon, and an explosion of technology that still shapes our world. In each case, Government didn't supplant private enterprise; it catalyzed private enterprise. It created the conditions for thousands of entrepreneurs and new businesses to adapt and to thrive.

We are a nation that has seen promise amid peril and claimed opportunity from ordeal. Now we must be that nation again, and that is why, even as it cuts back on programs we don't need, the budget I submit will invest in the three areas that are absolutely critical to our economic future: energy, health care, and education.

It begins with energy. We know the country that harnesses the power of clean, renewable energy will lead the 21st century. And yet, it is China that has launched the largest effort in history to make their economy energy efficient. We invented solar technology, but we've fallen behind countries like Germany and Japan in producing it. New plug-in hybrids roll off our assembly lines, but they will run on batteries made in Korea. Well, I do not accept a future where the jobs and industries of tomorrow take root beyond our borders, and I know you don't either. It is time for America to lead again.

Thanks to our recovery plan, we will double this Nation's supply of renewable energy in the next 3 years. We've also made the largest investment in basic research funding in American history, an investment that will spur not only new discoveries in energy but breakthroughs in medicine and science and technology.

We will soon lay down thousands of miles of power lines that can carry new energy to cities and towns across this country. And we will put Americans to work making our homes and buildings more efficient so that we can save billions of dollars on our energy bills.

But to truly transform our economy, to protect our security, and save our planet from the ravages of climate change, we need to ultimately make clean, renewable energy the profitable kind of energy. So I ask this Congress to send me legislation that places a market-based cap on carbon pollution and drives the production of more renewable energy in America. That's what we need. And to support that innovation, we will invest $15 billion a year to develop technologies like wind power and solar power, advanced biofuels, clean coal, and more efficient cars and trucks built right here in America.

Speaking of our auto industry, everyone recognizes that years of bad decisionmaking and a global recession have pushed our automakers to the brink. We should not, and will not, protect them from their own bad practices. But we are committed to the goal of a retooled, reimagined auto industry that can compete and win. Millions of jobs depend on it; scores of communities depend on it. And I believe the Nation that invented the automobile cannot walk away from it.

Now, none of this will come without cost, nor will it be easy. But this is America. We don't do what's easy. We do what's necessary to move this country forward.

And for that same reason, we must also address the crushing cost of health care. This is a cost that now causes a bankruptcy in America every 30 seconds. By the end of the year, it could cause 1.5 million Americans to lose their homes. In the last 8 years, premiums have grown four times faster than wages. And in each of these years, 1 million more Americans have lost their health insurance. It is one of the major reasons why small businesses close their doors and corporations ship jobs overseas. And it's one of the largest and fastest growing parts of our budget. Given these facts, we can no longer afford to put health care reform on hold. We can't afford to do it. It's time.

Already, we've done more to advance the cause of health care reform in the last 30 days than we've done in the last decade. When it was days old, this Congress passed a law to provide and protect health insurance for 11 million American children whose parents work full time. Our recovery plan will invest in electronic

health records, a new technology that will reduce errors, bring down costs, ensure privacy, and save lives. It will launch a new effort to conquer a disease that has touched the life of nearly every American, including me, by seeking a cure for cancer in our time. And it makes the largest investment ever in preventive care, because that's one of the best ways to keep our people healthy and our costs under control.

This budget builds on these reforms. It includes a historic commitment to comprehensive health care reform, a down payment on the principle that we must have quality, affordable health care for every American. It's a commitment that's paid for in part by efficiencies in our system that are long overdue. And it's a step we must take if we hope to bring down our deficit in the years to come.

Now, there will be many different opinions and ideas about how to achieve reform, and that's why I'm bringing together businesses and workers, doctors and health care providers, Democrats and Republicans to begin work on this issue next week.

I suffer no illusions that this will be an easy process. Once again, it will be hard. But I also know that nearly a century after Teddy Roosevelt first called for reform, the cost of our health care has weighed down our economy and our conscience long enough. So let there be no doubt: Health care reform cannot wait, it must not wait, and it will not wait another year.

The third challenge we must address is the urgent need to expand the promise of education in America. In a global economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, a good education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity, it is a prerequisite. Right now, three-quarters of the fastest growing occupations require more than a high school diploma. And yet, just over half of our citizens have that level of education. We have one of the highest high school dropout rates of any industrialized nation, and half of the students who begin college never finish.

This is a prescription for economic decline, because we know the countries that out-teach us today will outcompete us tomorrow. That is why it will be the goal of this administration to ensure that every child has access to a complete and competitive education, from the day they are born to the day they begin a career. That is a promise we have to make to the children of America.

Already, we've made historic investment in education through the economic recovery plan. We've dramatically expanded early childhood education and will continue to improve its quality, because we know that the most formative learning comes in those first years of life. We've made college affordable for nearly 7 million more students—7 million. And we have provided the resources necessary to prevent painful cuts and teacher layoffs that would set back our children's progress.

But we know that our schools don't just need more resources, they need more reform. And that is why this budget creates new teachers—new incentives for teacher performance, pathways for advancement, and rewards for success. We'll invest in innovative programs that are already helping schools meet high standards and close achievement gaps, and we will expand our commitment to charter schools.

It is our responsibility as lawmakers and as educators to make this system work. But it is the responsibility of every citizen to participate in it. So tonight I ask every American to commit to at least 1 year or more of higher education or career training. This can be community college or a 4-year school, vocational training or an apprenticeship. But whatever the training may be, every American will need to get more than a high school diploma.

And dropping out of high school is no longer an option. It's not just quitting on yourself, it's quitting on your country, and this country needs and values the talents of every American. That's why we will support—we will provide the support necessary for all young Americans to complete college and meet a new goal. By 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. That is a goal we can meet. That's a goal we can meet.

Now, I know that the price of tuition is higher than ever, which is why if you are willing to volunteer in your neighborhood or give

back to your community or serve your country, we will make sure that you can afford a higher education. And to encourage a renewed spirit of national service for this and future generations, I ask Congress to send me the bipartisan legislation that bears the name of Senator Orrin Hatch, as well as an American who has never stopped asking what he can do for his country, Senator Edward Kennedy.

These education policies will open the doors of opportunity for our children, but it is up to us to ensure they walk through them. In the end, there is no program or policy that can substitute for a parent, for a mother or father who will attend those parent-teacher conferences or help with homework or turn off the TV, put away the video games, read to their child. I speak to you not just as a President, but as a father, when I say that responsibility for our children's education must begin at home. That is not a Democratic issue or a Republican issue; that's an American issue.

There is, of course, another responsibility we have to our children. And that's the responsibility to ensure that we do not pass on to them a debt they cannot pay. That is critical. [*Applause*] I agree, absolutely. See, I know we can get some consensus in here. [*Laughter*] With the deficit we inherited, the cost of the crisis we face, and the long-term challenges we must meet, it has never been more important to ensure that as our economy recovers, we do what it takes to bring this deficit down. That is critical.

Now, I'm proud that we passed a recovery plan free of earmarks, and I want to pass a budget next year that ensures that each dollar we spend reflects only our most important national priorities.

And yesterday I held a fiscal summit where I pledged to cut the deficit in half by the end of my first term in office. My administration has also begun to go line by line through the Federal budget in order to eliminate wasteful and ineffective programs. As you can imagine, this is a process that will take some time. But we have already identified $2 trillion in savings over the next decade.

In this budget, we will end education programs that don't work and end direct payments to large agribusiness that don't need them. We'll eliminate the no-bid contracts that have wasted billions in Iraq and reform our defense budget so that we're not paying for cold war-era weapons systems we don't use. We will root out the waste and fraud and abuse in our Medicare program that doesn't make our seniors any healthier. We will restore a sense of fairness and balance to our Tax Code by finally ending the tax breaks for corporations that ship our jobs overseas.

In order to save our children from a future of debt, we will also end the tax breaks for the wealthiest 2 percent of Americans. Now, let me be clear—let me be absolutely clear, because I know you'll end up hearing some of the same claims that rolling back these tax breaks means a massive tax increase on the American people: If your family earns less than $250,000 a year, a quarter million dollars a year, you will not see your taxes increased a single dime. I repeat: Not one single dime. In fact—not a dime—in fact, the recovery plan provides a tax cut—that's right, a tax cut—for 95 percent of working families. And by the way, these checks are on the way.

Now, to preserve our long-term fiscal health, we must also address the growing costs in Medicare and Social Security. Comprehensive health care reform is the best way to strengthen Medicare for years to come. And we must also begin a conversation on how to do the same for Social Security, while creating tax-free universal savings accounts for all Americans.

Finally, because we're also suffering from a deficit of trust, I am committed to restoring a sense of honesty and accountability to our budget. That is why this budget looks ahead 10 years and accounts for spending that was left out under the old rules. And for the first time, that includes the full cost of fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. For 7 years, we have been a nation at war. No longer will we hide its price.

Along with our outstanding national security team, I'm now carefully reviewing our policies in both wars, and I will soon announce a way forward in Iraq that leaves Iraq to its people and responsibly ends this war.

And with our friends and allies, we will forge a new and comprehensive strategy for

Afghanistan and Pakistan to defeat Al Qaida and combat extremism, because I will not allow terrorists to plot against the American people from safe havens halfway around the world. We will not allow it.

As we meet here tonight, our men and women in uniform stand watch abroad and more are readying to deploy. To each and every one of them and to the families who bear the quiet burden of their absence, Americans are united in sending one message: We honor your service; we are inspired by your sacrifice; and you have our unyielding support.

To relieve the strain on our forces, my budget increases the number of our soldiers and marines. And to keep our sacred trust with those who serve, we will raise their pay and give our veterans the expanded health care and benefits that they have earned.

To overcome extremism, we must also be vigilant in upholding the values our troops defend, because there is no force in the world more powerful than the example of America. And that is why I have ordered the closing of the detention center at Guantanamo Bay and will seek swift and certain justice for captured terrorists. Because living our values doesn't make us weaker, it makes us safer and it makes us stronger. And that is why I can stand here tonight and say without exception or equivocation that the United States of America does not torture. We can make that commitment here tonight.

In words and deeds, we are showing the world that a new era of engagement has begun. For we know that America cannot meet the threats of this century alone, but the world cannot meet them without America. We cannot shun the negotiating table, nor ignore the foes or forces that could do us harm. We are instead called to move forward with the sense of confidence and candor that serious times demand.

To seek progress towards a secure and lasting peace between Israel and her neighbors, we have appointed an envoy to sustain our effort. To meet the challenges of the 21st century—from terrorism to nuclear proliferation, from pandemic disease to cyber threats to crushing poverty—we will strengthen old alliances, forge new ones, and use all elements of our national power.

And to respond to an economic crisis that is global in scope, we are working with the nations of the G–20 to restore confidence in our financial system, avoid the possibility of escalating protectionism, and spur demand for American goods in markets across the globe. For the world depends on us having a strong economy, just as our economy depends on the strength of the world's.

As we stand at this crossroads of history, the eyes of all people in all nations are once again upon us, watching to see what we do with this moment, waiting for us to lead. Those of us gathered here tonight have been called to govern in extraordinary times. It is a tremendous burden, but also a great privilege, one that has been entrusted to few generations of Americans. For in our hands lies the ability to shape our world for good or for ill.

I know that it's easy to lose sight of this truth, to become cynical and doubtful, consumed with the petty and the trivial. But in my life, I have also learned that hope is found in unlikely places, that inspiration often comes not from those with the most power or celebrity, but from the dreams and aspirations of ordinary Americans who are anything but ordinary.

I think of Leonard Abess, a bank president from Miami who reportedly cashed out of his company, took a $60 million bonus, and gave it out to all 399 people who worked for him, plus another 72 who used to work for him. He didn't tell anyone, but when the local newspaper found out, he simply said, "I knew some of these people since I was 7 years old. It didn't feel right getting the money myself."

I think about Greensburg, Kansas, a town that was completely destroyed by a tornado, but is being rebuilt by its residents as a global example of how clean energy can power an entire community, how it can bring jobs and businesses to a place where piles of bricks and rubble once lay. "The tragedy was terrible," said one of the men who helped them rebuild. "But the folks here know that it also provided an incredible opportunity."

I think about Ty'Sheoma Bethea, the young girl from that school I visited in Dillon, South Carolina, a place where the ceilings leak, the paint peels off the walls, and they have to stop teaching six times a day because the train barrels by their classroom. She had been told that her school is hopeless, but the other day after class she went to the public library and typed up a letter to the people sitting in this Chamber. She even asked her principal for the money to buy a stamp. The letter asks us for help and says: "We are just students trying to become lawyers, doctors, Congressmen like yourself, and one day President, so we can make a change to not just the State of South Carolina, but also the world. We are not quitters." That's what she said: "We are not quitters."

These words and these stories tell us something about the spirit of the people who sent us here. They tell us that even in the most trying times, amid the most difficult circumstances, there is a generosity, a resilience, a decency, and a determination that perseveres, a willingness to take responsibility for our future and for posterity. Their resolve must be our inspiration. Their concerns must be our cause. And we must show them and all our people that we are equal to the task before us.

I know—look, I know that we haven't agreed on every issue thus far. [*Laughter*] There are surely times in the future where we will part ways. But I also know that every American who is sitting here tonight loves this country and wants it to succeed. I know that. That must be the starting point for every debate we have in the coming months and where we return after those debates are done. That is the foundation on which the American people expect us to build common ground.

And if we do, if we come together and lift this Nation from the depths of this crisis, if we put our people back to work and restart the engine of our prosperity, if we confront without fear the challenges of our time and summon that enduring spirit of an America that does not quit, then someday years from now our children can tell their children that this was the time when we performed, in the words that are carved into this very Chamber, "something worthy to be remembered."

Thank you. God bless you, and may God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:16 p.m. in the House Chamber of the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Interior Department Inspector General Earl E. Devaney, Chair, Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board; and U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George J. Mitchell. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks on the Nomination of Gary F. Locke To Be Secretary of Commerce
February 25, 2009

President Obama. Good morning, everybody. Last night, I outlined my vision for our common future, one in which we accept the responsibility to act boldly and wisely to confront the extraordinary challenges of our times, put people back to work doing the work America needs done, and lay a new foundation for America's growth and prosperity.

Today I'm pleased to announce that I'm filling out my economic team with a man who shares that vision and who will play a key role in carrying it out as my Secretary of Commerce, Governor Gary Locke.

Now, I'm sure it's not lost on anyone that we've tried this a couple of times, but I'm a big believer in keeping at something until you get it right. And Gary is the right man for this job.

Sometimes the American story can be told in the span of a single mile. More than 100 years ago, Gary's grandfather left China on a steamship bound for America. He had no family here. He spoke no English. He found work as a servant and purpose in a dream. He raised a son, Gary's father, who would go on to fight in World War II, return home and open a grocery store, and later raise a family of his own.

And Gary didn't learn English until he was five, but he earned the rank of Eagle Scout, worked his way through Yale University with the help of scholarships and student loans, and

got a law degree. He returned to Washington State and served as a prosecutor, a State representative, chief executive of one of the most populous counties in the United States, and finally, as Governor in the State capitol building not 1 mile from the home where his grandfather worked as a servant all those years ago.

So Gary knows the American Dream; he's lived it. And that's why he shares my commitment to do whatever it takes to keep it alive in our time.

Because somewhere in America, another small-business owner is hard at work on the next big idea and dreaming big dreams for his grandchild; a scientist is on the cusp of the next breakthrough discovery; an entrepreneur is sketching designs for the startup that will revolutionize an industry. Our economic crisis has put these plans at risk, but it has not dimmed the dreams that inspired them.

And that's why we've put a recovery plan into action that will save or create 3½ million jobs over the next 2 years. That's why the vast majority of these jobs, 90 percent, will be created in the private sector, because we know that business, not government, is the engine of growth in this country.

It is entrepreneurship and industry that are the wellsprings of an economy that has been the greatest force of progress and prosperity in human history. It is America's workers and businesses that employ them that will determine our economic destiny. It is the task of the Department of Commerce to help create conditions in which our workers can prosper, our businesses can thrive, and our economy can grow.

That's what Gary did in Washington State, convincing businesses to set up shop and create the jobs of the 21st century, jobs in science and technology, agriculture and energy, jobs that pay well and can't be shipped overseas. That's what he did by establishing favorable markets abroad where Washington State's businesses could sell their products. That's what he did by unleashing powerful partnerships between State and local governments, between labor and business, all with an eye towards prosperity and progress for all those in his State who had dreams of their own.

So Gary will be a trusted voice in my Cabinet, a tireless advocate for our economic competitiveness, and an influential ambassador for American industry who will help us do everything we can—especially now—to promote our industry around the world. I'm grateful he's agreed to leave one Washington for another. I'm looking forward to having him on my team as we continue the work of turning our economy around and bringing about a stronger, more prosperous future for all Americans.

Ladies and gentlemen, I want to introduce to you an outstanding public servant, somebody I'm certain will be a great Secretary of Commerce, Gary Locke.

[*At this point, Secretary-designate Locke made brief remarks.*]

President Obama. Congratulations. You're going to be great.

Secretary-designate Locke. Thank you.

President Obama. All right, thank you everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:08 a.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to James Locke, father of Secretary-designate Locke. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary-designate Locke.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Economic Advisers
February 25, 2009

Hello, everybody. This afternoon I met with members of my economic team and some key leaders in Congress to discuss the threats to our financial markets in this new century and how we must transform our regulatory system to meet them.

In recent months, we've seen turmoil on Wall Street like we haven't seen in decades, as

major financial institutions have faltered or been sold off. And we have seen the fallout on Main Street, as the market crisis became a credit crisis, and families struggle to get loans to buy a home or a car, to start a small business or to pay for college.

This financial crisis was not inevitable. It happened when Wall Street wrongly presumed the markets would continuously rise, and traded in complex financial products without fully evaluating the risks. Here in Washington, our regulations lagged behind changes in our markets, and too often, regulators failed to use the authority that they had to protect consumers, markets, and the economy.

We now know from painful experience that we can no longer sustain 21—21st century markets with 20th century regulations, and that while free markets are the key to our progress, they do not give us free license to take whatever we can get, however we can get it.

But let me be clear: The choice we face is not between some oppressive government-run economy or a chaotic and unforgiving capitalism. Rather, strong financial markets require clear rules of the road, not to hinder financial institutions, but to protect consumers and investors, and ultimately to keep those financial institutions strong; not to stifle, but to advance competition, growth, and prosperity. And not just to manage crises, but to prevent crises from happening in the first place, by restoring accountability, transparency, and trust in our financial markets. These must be the goals of a 21st century regulatory framework that we seek to create.

Our meeting today was a critical first step in developing that framework. And I'm grateful for the legislative leaders to join me here with Secretary Geithner and Dr. Summers. We had a terrific conversation. I think this is an area where there is a growing consensus and where I think the capacity for people from different political parties and different perspectives to come together and solve problems.

I've asked my economic team to develop recommendations for regulatory reform, and then to collaborate with these Members of Congress and others from both sides of the aisle so they can start crafting legislation in the coming weeks and months.

We will not always see eye to eye in our work. We may disagree, and disagree strongly, about particular provisions. But there are certain core principles that I believe must shape any proposal for reform, and these are the principles that will guide our work.

First, financial institutions that pose serious risks, systemic risks, to our market should be subject to serious oversight by the Government. And here's why: When the Federal Reserve steps in as a lender of last resort, which it's had to do repeatedly since this financial crisis began, it's providing an insurance policy underwritten by the American taxpayer. And taxpayers should be assured that the Fed thoroughly understands the institutions that it is effectively insuring and actively monitoring them to make sure that they're not taking risks that will cost taxpayers in the long term.

Second, our regulatory system and each of our major markets must be strong enough to withstand both system-wide stress and the failure of one or more large institutions. And that means modernizing and streamlining our regulatory structure, and monitoring both the scale and scope of risks that institutions can take.

Third, to rebuild trust in our markets, we must redouble our efforts to promote openness, transparency, and plain language throughout our financial system.

Fourth, we need strong and uniform supervision of financial products marketed to investors and consumers. And we should base this oversight not on abstract models created by the institutions themselves, but on actual data on how actual people make financial decisions.

Fifth, we must demand strict accountability, starting at the top. Executives who violate the public trust must be held responsible.

Sixth, we must make sure our system of regulations covers appropriate institutions and markets, and is comprehensive and free of gaps, and prevents those being regulated from cherry-picking among competing regulators.

Finally, we must recognize that the challenges we face are not just American challenges, they are global challenges. So as we work to set high regulatory standards here in the United

States, we have to challenge other countries around the world to do the same. That's how we will stop financial crises from spilling across borders and prevent global crises of the sort that we now face.

In the end, the work of constructing a new regulatory framework will not be easy, and reform will not happen overnight. But we must never forget that our market has always been the engine of America's success, rewarding innovators and risk-takers, creating opportunities for generations of Americans and prosperity that is the envy of the world.

And I have the utmost confidence that if these outstanding public servants standing beside me are working in concert, if we all do our jobs, if we once again guide the market's invisible hand with a higher principle, our markets will recover. Our economy will once again thrive, and America will once again lead the world in this new century as it did in the last.

So thank you very much, everybody. See you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:56 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner; and Lawrence H. Summers, Director, National Economic Council.

Remarks on the Federal Budget
February 26, 2009

All right. Before I begin, I have some good news to report. Starting today, the recently unemployed will benefit from a COBRA subsidy that will make health care affordable. At a time when health care is too often too expensive for the unemployed, this critical step will help 7 million Americans who've lost their jobs keep their health care. That's 7 million Americans who will have one less thing to worry about when they go to sleep at night. Equally important, it prevents a further downward spiral in our economy by ensuring that these families don't fall further behind because of mounting health care bills. And it is a direct result of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that I signed into law the other week, a recovery plan that has only just begun to yield benefits for the American people.

But while we must add to our deficits in the short term to provide immediate relief to families and get our economy moving, it is only by restoring fiscal discipline over the long run that we can produce sustained growth and shared prosperity. And that is precisely the purpose of the budget I'm submitting to Congress today.

In keeping with my commitment to make our Government more open and transparent, this budget is an honest accounting of where we are and where we intend to go. For too long, our budget has not told the whole truth about how precious tax dollars are spent. Large sums have been left off the books, including the true cost of fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan. And that kind of dishonest accounting is not how you run your family budgets at home; it's not how your Government should run its budgets either. We need to be honest with ourselves about what costs are being racked up, because that's how we'll come to grips with the hard choices that lie ahead. And there are some hard choices that lie ahead.

Just as a family has to make hard choices about where to spend and where to save, so do we as a Government. You know, there are times where you can afford to redecorate your house and there are times where you need to focus on rebuilding its foundation. Today, we have to focus on foundations. Having inherited a trillion-dollar deficit that will take a long time for us to close, we need to focus on what we need to move the economy forward, not on what's nice to have. And that's why, on Monday, I held a fiscal summit to come up with a plan to put us on a more sustainable path. And that is why, as we develop a full budget that will come out this spring, we're going to go through our books page by page, line by line, to eliminate waste and inefficiency. This is a process that will take some time, but in the last 30 days alone, we have already identified $2

trillion in deficit reductions that will help us cut our deficit in half by the end of my first term.

For example, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack is saving nearly $20 million with reforms to modernize programs and streamline bureaucracy. Interior Secretary Salazar will save nearly $200 million by stopping wasteful payments to clean up abandoned coal mines that just happen to have already been cleaned up. Education Secretary Duncan is set to save tens of millions dollars more by cutting an ineffective mentoring program for students, a program whose mission is being carried out by 100 other programs in 13 other agencies.

We've targeted almost $50 billion in savings by cracking down on overpayments of benefits and tax loopholes; that is money going to businesses and people to which they are simply not entitled.

This is just the beginning of the cuts we're going to make. No part of my budget will be free from scrutiny or untouched by reform. We will end no-bid contracts that have wasted billions in Iraq and end tax breaks for corporations that ship jobs overseas. And we'll save billions of dollars by rolling back tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans while giving a middle class tax cut to 95 percent of hard-working families. But we'll also have to do something more. We will, each and every one of us, have to compromise on certain things we care about, but which we simply cannot afford right now. That's a sacrifice we're going to have to make.

Now, I know that this will not always sit well with the special interests and their lobbyists here in Washington, who think our budget and tax system is just fine as it is. No wonder; it works for them. I don't think that we can continue on our current course. I work for the American people, and I'm determined to bring the change that the people voted for last November. And that means cutting what we don't need to pay for what we do.

Now, what I won't do—as I mentioned at the joint session speech a couple of days ago—what I won't do is sacrifice investments that will make America stronger, more competitive, and more prosperous in the 21st century; investments that have been neglected for too long. These investments must be America's priorities, and that's what they will be when I sign this budget into law.

Because our future depends on our ability to break free from oil that's controlled by foreign dictators, we need to make clean, renewable energy the profitable kind of energy. That's why we'll be working with Congress on legislation that places a market-based cap on carbon pollution and drives the production of more renewable energy.

And to support this effort, we'll invest $15 billion a year for 10 years to develop technologies like wind power and solar power and to build more efficient cars and trucks right here in America. It's an investment that will put people back to work, make our Nation more secure, and help us meet our obligation as good stewards of the Earth we all inhabit.

Because of crushing health care costs and the fact that they drag down our economy, bankrupt our families, and represent the fastest growing part of our budget, we must make it a priority to give every single American quality, affordable health care. That's why this budget builds on what we have already done over the last month to expand coverage for millions more children, to computerize health records to cut waste and reduce medical errors, which save, by the way, not only tax dollars but lives.

With this budget, we are making a historic commitment to comprehensive health care reform. It's a step that will not only make families healthier and companies more competitive, but over the long term, it will also help us bring down our deficit.

And because countries that out-teach us today will outcompete us tomorrow, we must make excellence the hallmark of an American education. That's why this budget supports the historic investment in education we made as part of the recovery plan by matching new resources with new reform. We want to create incentives for better teacher performance and pathways for advancement. We want to reward success in the classroom. And we'll invest in innovative initiatives that will help schools meet high standards and close achievement gaps, preparing students for the high-paying jobs of tomorrow, but also helping them fulfill their God-given potential.

These must be the priorities reflected in our budget. For in the end, a budget is more than simply numbers on a page. It is a measure of how well we are living up to our obligations to ourselves and one another. It is a test for our commitment to making America what it was always meant to be, a place where all things are possible for all people. That is a commitment we are making in this, my first budget, and it is a commitment I will work every day to uphold in the months and years ahead.

I want to thank all of you for being here, but I also want to give a special thanks to Peter Orszag, Rob Nabors. They have been working tirelessly in getting this budget prepared, getting it out in a timely fashion. They're going to be doing more work in the weeks to come. And I am absolutely confident that as messy as this process can sometimes be, that we are going to be able to produce a budget that delivers for the American people.

All right. Thank you.

No questions today. Good to see you though.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:55 a.m. in Room 350 at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Peter R. Orszag, Director, and Robert L. Nabors, Deputy Director, Office of Management and Budget.

Remarks on Military Operations in Iraq at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina
February 27, 2009

The President. Thank you very much. Please be seated. To General Hejlik, for the outstanding work that he is doing, thank you so much. Good morning, marines.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Good morning, Camp Lejeune.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Good morning, Jacksonville. Thank you so much for the extraordinarily welcome. Just a few additional people I want to note are here: Governor Bev Perdue of North Carolina—where is Governor Perdue? Stand up, please. We have the new United States Senator from North Carolina, Kay Hagan; members of the North Carolina congressional delegation who are here today, please stand and wave. And thank you, Staff Sergeant Mink, for the outstanding rendition of our national anthem.

I also want to acknowledge all of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, and that includes the Camp Lejeune marines now serving with—or soon joining—the 2d Marine Expeditionary Force in Iraq; those with Special Purpose Marine air force—Air Ground Task Force in Afghanistan; and those among the 8,000 marines who are preparing to deploy to Afghanistan. We have you in our prayers. We pay tribute to your service. We thank you and your families for all that you do for America. And I want you all to know that there is no higher honor or greater responsibility than serving as your Commander in Chief. Thanks to all of you.

I also want to take this opportunity to acknowledge Ryan Crocker, who recently completed his service as our Ambassador to Iraq. This is one of the unsung heroes of this multiyear effort. Throughout his career, Ryan has always taken on the toughest assignments. He is an example of the very best that this Nation has to offer, and we owe him a great debt of gratitude. He carried on his work with an extraordinary degree of cooperation with two of our finest generals, General David Petraeus and General Ray Odierno, who will be critical in carrying forward the strategy that I will outline today.

Next month will mark the sixth anniversary of the war in Iraq. By any measure, this has already been a long war. For the men and women of America's Armed Forces, and for your families, the war has been one of the most extraordinary chapters of service in the history of our Nation. Many of you have endured tour after tour after tour of duty. You've known the dangers of combat and the lonely distance from loved ones. You have fought against tyranny and disorder. You have bled for your best

friends and for unknown Iraqis. And you have borne an enormous burden for your fellow citizens, while extending a precious opportunity to the people of Iraq. Under tough circumstances, the men and women of the United States military have served with honor and succeeded beyond any expectation.

Today I've come to speak to you about how the war in Iraq will end. To understand where we need to go in Iraq, it's important for the American people to understand where we now stand. Thanks in great measure to your service and your sacrifice, and your family's sacrifices, the situation in Iraq has improved. Violence has been reduced substantially from the horrific sectarian killing of 2006 and 2007. Al Qaida in Iraq has been dealt a serious blow by our troops and Iraq's security forces and through our partnership with Sunni Arabs. The capacity of Iraq's security forces has improved, and Iraq's leaders have taken steps towards political accommodation. The relative peace and strong participation in January's Provincial elections sent a powerful message to the world about how far Iraqis have come in pursuing their aspirations through a peaceful political process.

But let there be no doubt: Iraq is not yet secure, and there will be difficult days ahead. Violence will continue to be a part of life in Iraq. Too many fundamental political questions about Iraq's future remain unresolved. Too many Iraqis are still displaced or destitute. Declining oil revenues will put an added strain on a government that has difficulty delivering basic service. Not all of Iraq's neighbors are contributing to its security. Some are working at times to undermine it. And even as Iraq's Government is on a surer footing, it is not yet a full partner, politically and economically, in the region or with the international community.

In short, today there is a renewed cause for hope in Iraq, but that hope is resting on an emerging foundation. On my first full day in office, I directed my national security team to undertake a comprehensive review of our strategy in Iraq to determine the best way to strengthen that foundation, while strengthening American national security. I have listened to my Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates. I have listened to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, led by Admiral Mullen, as well as the commanders on the ground. We have acted with careful consideration of events on the ground, with respect for the security agreements between the United States and Iraq, and with a critical recognition that the long-term solution in Iraq must be political, not military, because the most important decisions that have to be made about Iraq's future must now be made by Iraqis.

We've also taken into account the simple reality that America can no longer afford to see Iraq in isolation from other priorities. We face the challenge of refocusing on Afghanistan and Pakistan, of relieving the burden of our military and military families, of rebuilding our struggling economy. These are challenges that we must meet and will meet.

Today I can announce that our review is complete, and that the United States will pursue a new strategy to end the war in Iraq through a transition to full Iraqi responsibility. This strategy is grounded in a clear and achievable goal shared by the Iraqi people and the American people: an Iraq that is sovereign, stable, and self-reliant. To achieve that goal, we will work to promote an Iraqi Government that is just, representative, and accountable, and that provides neither support nor safe haven to terrorists. We will help Iraq build new ties of trade and commerce with the world. And we will forge a partnership with the people and Government of Iraq that contributes to the peace and security of the region.

But understand this, we—here's what we will not do: We will not let the pursuit of the perfect stand in the way of achievable goals. We cannot rid Iraq of every single individual who opposes America or sympathizes with our adversaries. We cannot police Iraq's streets indefinitely until they are completely safe, nor can we stay until Iraq's union is perfect. We cannot sustain indefinitely a commitment that has put a strain on our military and will cost the American people nearly a trillion dollars. America's men and women in uniform—so many of you—have fought block by block, Province by Province, year after year, to give the Iraqis this chance to choose a better future. Now we must ask the Iraqi people to seize it.

The first part of this strategy is therefore the responsible removal of our combat brigades from Iraq. As a candidate for President, I made clear my support for a timeline of 16 months to carry out this drawdown, while pledging to consult closely with our military commanders upon taking office to ensure that we preserve the gains we've made and to protect our troops. These consultations are now complete, and I have chosen a timeline that will remove our combat brigades over the next 18 months.

So let me say this as plainly as I can: By August 31, 2010, our combat mission in Iraq will end. As we carry out this drawdown, my highest priority will be the safety and security of our troops and civilians in Iraq. So we will proceed carefully, and I will consult closely with my military commanders on the ground and with the Iraqi Government. There will surely be difficult periods and tactical adjustments. But our enemies should be left with no doubt: This plan gives our military the forces and flexibility they need to support our Iraqi partners and to succeed.

After we remove our combat brigades, our mission will change from combat to supporting the Iraqi Government and its security forces as they take the absolute lead in securing their country. As I have long said, we will retain a transitional force to carry out three distinct functions: training, equipping, and advising Iraqi security forces as long as they remain nonsectarian; conducting targeted counterterrorism missions; and protecting our ongoing civilian and military efforts within Iraq. Initially, this force will likely be made up of 35,000 to 50,000 U.S. troops.

Through this period of transition, we will carry out further redeployments. And under the status of forces agreement with the Iraqi Government, I intend to remove all U.S. troops from Iraq by the end of 2011. So we will complete this transition to Iraqi responsibility, and we will bring our troops home with the honor that they have earned.

As we remove our combat brigades, we will pursue the second part of our strategy: sustained diplomacy on behalf of a more peaceful and prosperous Iraq. The drawdown of our military should send a clear signal that Iraq's future is now its own responsibility. The long-term success of the Iraqi nation will depend on decisions made by Iraq's leaders and the fortitude of the Iraqi people. Iraq is a sovereign country with legitimate institutions; America cannot and should not take their place. However, a strong political, diplomatic, and civilian effort on our part can advance progress and help lay a foundation for lasting peace and security.

This effort will be led by our new Ambassador to Iraq, Chris Hill. From his time in the Peace Corps to his work in Kosovo and Korea, Ambassador Hill has been tested, and he has shown the pragmatism and skill that we need right now. And he will be supported by the courageous and capable work of so many American diplomats and aid workers who are now serving in Iraq.

Going forward, we can make a difference on several fronts. We will work with the United Nations to support national elections, while helping Iraqis improve local government. We can serve as an honest broker in pursuit of fair and durable agreements on issues that have divided Iraq's leaders. And just as we will support Iraq's security forces, we will help Iraq's institutions strengthen their capacity to protect the rule of law, confront corruption, and deliver basic services.

Diplomacy and assistance is also required to help millions of displaced Iraqis. These men, women, and children are living—are a living consequence of this war and a challenge to stability in the region, and they must be a part of Iraq's reconciliation and recovery. America has a strategic interest and a moral responsibility to act. And in the coming months, my administration will provide more assistance and take steps to increase international support for countries already hosting refugees. We'll cooperate with others to resettle Iraqis facing great personal risk. And we will work with the Iraqi Government over time to resettle refugees and displaced Iraqis within Iraq, because there are few more powerful indicators of lasting peace than when displaced citizens return home.

Now, before I go any further, I want to take a moment to speak directly to the people of Iraq. You are a great nation, rooted in the cradle of civilization. You are joined together by enduring accomplishments and a history that connects you as surely as the two rivers carved into your land. In years past, you have persevered through tyranny and terror, through personal insecurity and sectarian violence. And instead of giving in to the forces of disunion, you stepped back from a descent into civil war and showed a proud resilience that deserves our respect.

Our nations have known difficult times together. But ours is a bond forged by shared bloodshed and countless friendships among our people. We Americans have offered our most precious resource, our young men and women, to work with you to rebuild what was destroyed by despotism, to root out our common enemies, and to seek peace and prosperity for our children and grandchildren, and for yours.

There are those who will try to prevent that future for Iraq, who will insist that Iraq's differences cannot be reconciled without more killing. They represent the forces that destroy nations and lead only to despair, and they will test our will in the months and years to come. America too has known these forces. We endured the pain of civil war and bitter divisions of region and race. But hostility and hatred are no match for justice. They offer no pathway to peace, and they must not stand between the people of Iraq and a future of reconciliation and hope.

So to the Iraqi people, let me be clear about America's intentions. The United States pursues no claim on your territory or your resources. We respect your sovereignty and the tremendous sacrifices you have made for your country. We seek a full transition to Iraqi responsibility for the security of your country. And going forward, we can build a lasting relationship founded upon mutual interests and mutual respect as Iraq takes its rightful place in the community of nations.

That leads me to the third part of our strategy, comprehensive American engagement across the region. The future of Iraq is inseparable from the future of the broader Middle East, so we must work with our friends and partners to establish a new framework that advances Iraq's security and the region's. It's time for Iraq to be a full partner in regional dialog and for Iraq's neighbors to establish productive and normalized relations with Iraq. And going forward, the United States will pursue principled and sustained engagement with all of the nations in the region—all the nations in the region, and that, by the way, will include Iran and Syria.

This reflects a fundamental truth: We can no longer deal with regional challenges in isolation. We need a smarter, more sustainable, and comprehensive approach. That is why we are renewing our diplomacy, while relieving the burden on our military. That is why we are refocusing on Al Qaida in Afghanistan and Pakistan, developing a strategy to use all elements of American power to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon, and actively seeking a lasting peace between Israel and the Arab world. And that is why we have named three of America's most accomplished diplomats—George Mitchell, Dennis Ross, and Richard Holbrooke—to support Secretary Hillary Clinton and myself as we carry forward this agenda.

Every nation and every group must know—whether you wish America good or ill—that the end of the war in Iraq will enable a new era of American leadership and engagement in the Middle East. This does not lessen our commitment. We are going to be enhancing that commitment to bring about a better day in that region, and that era has just begun.

Finally, I want to be very clear about my strategy—that my strategy for ending the war in Iraq does not end with military plans or diplomatic agendas; it endures through our commitment to uphold the sacred trust with every man and woman who has served in Iraq.

You make up a fraction of the American population, but in an age when so many people and institutions have acted irresponsibly, so many of you did the opposite, you volunteered to bear the heaviest burden. [*Applause*] You volunteered to bear the heaviest burden. And for you and your families, the war does not end when you come home. It lives on in the memories of

your fellow soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines who gave their lives. It endures in the wound that is slow to heal, the disability that isn't going away, the dream that wakes you up at night, the stiffening in your spine when a car backfires down the street.

You and your families have done your duty, now a grateful nation must do ours. That is why, as reflected in my new budget, I am increasing the number of soldiers and marines, so that we lessen the burden on those who are serving. That is why I've committed to expanding our system of veterans health care to serve more patients and to provide better care in more places. We will continue building new wounded warrior facilities across America and invest in new ways of identifying and treating the signature wounds of this war, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and traumatic brain injury, as well as other combat injuries.

We also know that service does not end with the person wearing the uniform. In her visits with military families across the country, my wife Michelle has learned firsthand about the unique burden that your families endure every day. I want you to know this: Military families are a top priority for Michelle and me, and they will be a top priority for my administration.

We will raise military pay and continue providing—[*applause*]—I figured that'd be an applause line, Secretary Gates. [*Laughter*] We're going to continue providing quality childcare, job training for spouses, and expanded counseling and outreach to families that have known the separation and stress of war. We will also heed the lesson of history—that those who fight in battle can form the backbone of our middle class—by implementing a 21st-century GI bill to help our veterans live out their dreams.

As a nation, we've had our share of debates about the war in Iraq. It has at times divided us as a people. To this very day, there are some Americans who want to stay in Iraq longer and some who want to leave faster. But there should be no disagreement on what the men and women of our military have achieved.

And so I want to be very clear: We sent our troops to Iraq to do away with Saddam Hussein's regime, and you got the job done. We kept our troops in Iraq to help establish a sovereign government, and you got the job done. And we will leave the Iraqi people with a hard-earned opportunity to live a better life. That is your achievement; that is the prospect that you have made possible.

There are many lessons to be learned from what we've experienced. We have learned that America must go to war with clearly defined goals, which is why I've ordered a review of our policy in Afghanistan. We have learned that we must always weigh the costs of action and communicate those costs candidly to the American people, which is why I've put Iraq and Afghanistan into my budget. We have learned that the 21st—in the 21st century, we have to use all elements of American power to achieve our objectives, which is why I'm committed to building our civilian national security capacity so that the burden is not continually pushed onto our military. We have learned that our political leaders must pursue the broad and bipartisan support that our national security policies depend on, which is why I will consult with Congress in carrying out my plans. And we have learned the importance of working closely with friends and allies, which is why we are launching a new era of engagement and diplomacy in the world.

The starting point for our policies must always be the safety and security of the American people. I know that you, the men and women of the finest fighting force in the history of the world, can meet any challenge and defeat any foe. And as long as I am your Commander in Chief, I promise you that I will only send you into harm's way when it is absolutely necessary and provide you with the equipment and support you need to get the job done. That is the most important lesson of all, for the consequences of war are dire, the sacrifices immeasurable. You know because you've seen those sacrifices; you've lived them. And we all honor you for them.

Semper Fidelis—it means always being faithful to the Corps and to country and to the memory of fallen comrades like Corporal Jonathan Yale and Lance Corporal Jordan Haerter. These young men enlisted in a time of war,

knowing they would face great danger. They came here, to Camp Lejeune, as they trained for their mission. Last April, they were standing guard in Anbar. In an age when suicide is a weapon, they were suddenly faced with an oncoming truck filled with explosives. These two marines stood their ground; these two marines opened fire; these two marines stopped that truck. When the thousands of pounds of explosives detonated, they had saved 50 fellow marines, they had saved Iraqi police who would have been in the truck's path, but Corporal Yale and Lance Corporal Haerter lost their own lives. Jonathan was 21, and Jordan was 19.

In the town where Jordan Haerter was from, a bridge was dedicated in his name. One marine who traveled to the ceremony said: "We flew here from all over the country to pay tribute to our friend Jordan, who risked his life to save us. We wouldn't be here without him."

America's time in Iraq is filled with stories of men and women like this. Their names are written into the bridges and town squares of this country. They are etched into stone at Arlington and in quiet places of rest across our land. They are spoken in schools and on city blocks. They live on in the memories of those who wear your uniform, in the hearts of those they loved, and in the freedom of the nation they served.

Each American who has served in Iraq has their own story. Each of you has your own story. And that story is now a part of the history of the United States of America, a nation that exists only because free men and women have bled for it, from the beaches of Normandy to the deserts of Anbar, from the mountains of Korea to the streets of Kandahar. You teach us that the price of freedom is great. Your sacrifice should challenge all of us—every single American—to ask what we can do to be better citizens.

There will be more danger in the months ahead. We will face new tests and unforeseen trials. But thanks to the sacrifices of those who have served, we have forged hard-earned progress, we are leaving Iraq to its people, and we have begun the work of ending this war.

Thank you. God bless you, God bless the United States of America. Semper Fi. Hooah!

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:06 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. Dennis J. Hejlik, USMC, commanding general, 2d Marine Expeditionary Force; S. Sgt. Angela Mink, USMC, public affairs chief, Marine Corps Air Station New River; Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commander, U.S. Central Command; Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Forces—Iraq; U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George J. Mitchell; Dennis Ross, Special Adviser to the Secretary of State for The Gulf and Southwest Asia; and Richard C. Holbrooke, U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Interview With Master Sergeant Rusty Barfield of the Pentagon Channel
February 27, 2009

The President's Decisionmaking/Iraq/Afghanistan

M. Sgt. Barfield. Mr. President, thanks for joining us on the Pentagon Channel.

The President. Thank you so much for having me.

M. Sgt. Barfield. Thank you. You face many tough issues as Commander in Chief, for instance, drawing down forces in Iraq and ramping up in Afghanistan. What goes through your mind when you are in front of these marines here at Camp Lejeune and you have to tell them that they're going into harm's way?

The President. Well, look, this is the most important, most sobering decision that you make as the President in your role as Commander in Chief. And my main goal is to make sure that any time we are deploying our men and women in uniform, that the civilian leadership has done everything that it needs to do to make the best decision possible.

And that means consulting with our commanders on the ground; it means talking to every level of Pentagon leadership, from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to my Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates; it means also consulting with a

wide range of people outside, so that you're not just listening to one voice, you're listening to a whole bunch of them and then arriving at some sort of consensus.

And I'm confident that with respect to our drawdown in Iraq, it's done in a way that General Odierno is comfortable with, General Petraeus is comfortable with, that our diplomatic efforts can be ramped up to accompany that drawdown.

With respect to Afghanistan, I think that all of us believe that the situation has deteriorated somewhat there, and that's why I immediately made a decision for us to send additional troops, including marines from Camp Lejeune. But I also think that we've got to refine our goals and our strategy more effectively. I think in Afghanistan we've seen that strategy drift a little bit.

And, you know, my most important job as Commander in Chief is to make sure that if we're sending folks there, we have a well-thought-out strategy, clear goals, and that they're achievable and that I can marshal and maintain the strongest support possible from folks back home.

Afghanistan

M. Sgt. Barfield. And to sort of continue with that topic, you said that the U.S. will forge a new and comprehensive strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan to defeat Al Qaida and to combat extremism in the region. What will this mean for our men and women in Afghanistan now and in the future, sir?

The President. Well, first of all, by sending an additional 17,000 troops, we are obviously going to be bolstering our forces in Afghanistan, and that will obviously be important to the folks that are already there. If you talk to General McKiernan, our commander in Afghanistan, he will tell you that especially in the southern regions of the country you've seen brazen attacks from Taliban forces, extremist forces, and we want to make sure that we have the force necessary to meet that.

I also think that because you're going to see that additional engagement, there is the risk of greater additional casualties, at least in the short term, just as there was in Iraq. And, you know, that's something that, you know, we'll have to monitor very carefully.

The key, though, is to understand that we are not going to win in Afghanistan or get an acceptable outcome in Afghanistan if we're only dependent on our military. Our military does everything that's asked of them, but anybody who knows the region knows that if we don't have a Afghan Government that can deliver for its people, if we don't have an economic development strategy where farmers don't have to grown heroin poppy but instead can grow other crops so that they're not feeding narcoterrorism, if we don't have Pakistan providing us support on the other side of the border that cleans out some of these areas where Al Qaida and the Taliban are using as safe havens, then this isn't going to work.

And my goal is to have a comprehensive strategy of not just force, but also diplomacy and development that is all moving in concert to get the kind of outcome we want.

Iraq

M. Sgt. Barfield. Yes, sir. You just talked about your plan for drawing down combatant forces in Iraq by the end of August 2010. Why is this timeline so important to you, sir?

The President. Well, because I think it's important, first of all, to send a very strong, clear signal to the Iraqis that they are going to need to be taking these responsibilities, that we mean it when we say that we're not going to be a permanent occupying force in Iraq. And we already have an agreement, a security agreement that was signed by the previous administration and by the Maliki Government that says we've got to be out of there by the end of 2011. We don't want to have 140,000 troops there the day before we have to be out of there; we've got to have a glide path that is responsible in pulling our troops out.

And so what we've done is we've set a point of August 31, 2010, as a transition point, after the Iraqi elections have taken place, where there's, obviously, potential vulnerability. After that point, you're looking at maybe six brigades, 35,000 to 50,000 troops overall, who are providing logistical support, training, are providing protection for U.S. civilian as well as

military personnel, and some counterterrorist—counterterrorism striking capability.

That then gets phased down over the next year and a half or so, until finally at the end of 2011, we should have no troops there. I think it's a responsible plan that meets our objectives, and it's one that was created in close consultation with our military commanders on the ground.

U.S. Troop Levels in Iraq

M. Sgt. Barfield. Yes, sir. And in continuing on with that topic, what will be the major measuring stick, if you will, when we talk about the 35,000 to 50,000 troops? What is it that's going to really sway you in terms of, is it 35,000, is it 40,000, or is it 50,000?

The President. Well, you know, I think that all these decisions have to be made based on what the situation is at the time, and it's very hard to anticipate exactly what things are going to be like in 18 months. If we continue to make strong progress in training the Iraqi security forces, if the elections are peaceful, if we've seen resolution of some of the issues that are creating sectarian tension in Iraq, like the oil laws and how much power the national Government has versus the Provincial governments, if those issues are getting resolved peacefully through a regular political process, then that probably means that we're going to be able to have less troops—support there, as of August 31st of next year. If some of those things haven't happened, then that will put more of a burden on us, as well as the Iraqis.

So our hope is, is that we're doing everything right leading up to that point so that by the time we get to that transition period, we are well prepared to start phasing our entire operation out of Iraq.

Military Families/Benefits for Military Personnel

M. Sgt. Barfield. Mr. President, how does your plan for Iraq and Afghanistan deal with the issue of relieving the pressure on the fighting force and their families?

The President. Well, this is one of the most important issues that we face. I don't need to tell you the enormous burden that our men and women in uniform have been under: so many people I meet on repeated tours—three, four tours of duty; the stop-loss policy that's hit a number of our fighting men and women; the burden on military families, something that my wife, the First Lady, Michelle, has taken very seriously and talked to a lot of families about.

So first of all, obviously, as we start drawing down, that puts less pressure on military families. That means that we can start ending—we can end stop-loss policy. We can start getting back to the kinds of rotations where, you know, after a year of service, then people have a lot more time back home than they have had over the last several years, which is good for everybody.

In addition, my budget has also called for an increase in the force structure, the size of the Marines and of the Army. So that will also relieve some of the pressure, and it will allow us to meet some of the strategic needs not just in Afghanistan and Iraq, but around the world. I mean, there's a big world out there, and right now we don't have the kind of strategic capability that we should to meet other emergency situations that might arise.

Along those same lines, one big piece of relief, I think you heard during the speech today, is that we're going to have a pay increase for our troops. That, obviously, is important. But beyond that, in the recovery plan that I got passed through Congress we have a whole slew of steps that we're taking that are going to provide some immediate help to the military families. There's a lot of money in there for construction of wounded warrior treatment centers, construction of additional housing and facilities for military families.

In my budget, we've got additional money for daycare, additional money for training, making sure that the GI bill that was signed last year by Congress, that that is adequately funded and implemented.

So one of the things that's very important to me is improved quality of life, making sure that our troops and their families are supported, honored, and that our veterans, when they come home, are treated with the respect and the care that they need.

Military Personnel/Military Families

M. Sgt. Barfield. Yes, sir. I have a final question for you, sir; I know you have a full plate today. If you could sit down and speak to each military member and their family, as Commander in Chief, what would you tell them, and how would you convey your commitment to them, sir?

The President. Well, first of all, what I'd tell them is thank you. And you know, just yesterday, I had the mother and father of a fallen marine, who actually was stationed here at Camp Lejeune—I had written them a letter of gratitude and condolence. Their son had just been killed relatively recently. They actually got a ride on Air Force One down here because their grandchildren, their son's children, are still down here.

And what I told them was, first of all, thank you; that all of America is grateful. We enjoy the freedoms we do because of what young men and women like that are willing to do on our behalf. And I wanted to tell them also that I carry them in my mind every single day when I'm making decisions; that when I am thinking about troop deployments, when I'm thinking about budgets, when I'm thinking about what our foreign policy is going to be, uppermost in my mind is understanding that young men and women are willing to offer up their last full measure of devotion to this country. The least they can expect is, is that their President is going to get it right and to keep them in mind when he is making the decision.

M. Sgt. Barfield. Yes, sir. I really appreciate you joining us on the Pentagon Channel, sir.

The President. I enjoyed it very much. Thank you so much.

M. Sgt. Barfield. Thank you, sir.

The President. You bet.

NOTE: The interview began taping at 2:15 p.m. at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commander, U.S. Central Command; Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Forces—Iraq; Gen. David D. McKiernan, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan; and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq.

Memorandum on Transfer of Detainee to Control of the Attorney General
February 27, 2009

Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense

Subject: Transfer of Detainee to Control of the Attorney General

Based on the information available to me, including the memorandum from the Secretary of Defense and the Attorney General dated February 26, 2009, and the joint recommendation contained therein, I hereby determine that it is in the interest of the United States that Ali Saleh Kahlah al-Marri be released from detention by the Secretary of Defense and transferred to the control of the Attorney General for the purpose of criminal proceedings against him.

Accordingly, by the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, I hereby direct you to transfer Mr. al-Marri to the control of the Attorney General upon the Attorney General's request. This memorandum supersedes the Presidential directive of June 23, 2003, to the Secretary of Defense, which ordered the detention of Mr. al-Marri as an enemy combatant. Upon Mr. al-Marri's transfer to the control of the Attorney General, the authority to detain Mr. al-Marri provided to the Secretary of Defense in the June 23, 2003, order shall cease.

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this memorandum.

The President's Weekly Address
February 28, 2009

Two years ago, we set out on a journey to change the way that Washington works. We sought a Government that served not the interests of powerful lobbyists or the wealthiest few, but the middle class Americans I met every day in every community along the campaign trail, responsible men and women who are working harder than ever, worrying about their jobs, and struggling to raise their families. In so many town halls and backyards, they spoke of their hopes for a Government that finally confronts the challenges that their families face every day, a Government that treats their tax dollars as responsibly as they treat their own hard-earned paychecks.

That's the change I promised as a candidate for President. It is the change the American people voted for in November. And it is the change represented by the budget I sent to Congress this week.

During the campaign, I promised a fair and balanced Tax Code that would cut taxes for 95 percent of working Americans, roll back the tax breaks for those making over $250,000 a year, and end the tax breaks for corporations that ship our jobs overseas. This budget does that.

I promised an economy run on clean, renewable energy that will create new American jobs, new American industries, and free us from the dangerous grip of foreign oil. This budget puts us on that path, through a market-based cap on carbon pollution that will make renewable energy the profitable kind of energy, through investments in wind power and solar power, advanced biofuels, clean coal, and more fuel-efficient American cars and American trucks.

I promised to bring down the crushing cost of health care, a cost that bankrupts one American every 30 seconds, forces small businesses to close their doors, and saddles our Government with more debt. This budget keeps that promise, with a historic commitment to reform that will lead to lower costs and quality, affordable health care for every American.

I promised an education system that will prepare every American to compete, so Americans can win in a global economy. This budget will help us meet that goal, with new incentives for teacher performance and pathways for advancement, new tax credits that will make college more affordable for all who want to go, and new support to ensure that those who do go finish their degree.

This budget also reflects the stark reality of what we've inherited, a trillion dollar deficit, a financial crisis, and a costly recession. Given this reality, we'll have to be more vigilant than ever in eliminating the programs we don't need in order to make room for the investments we do need. I promised to do this by going through the Federal budget page by page and line by line. That's a process we have already begun, and I am pleased to say that we've already identified 2 trillion dollars worth of deficit reductions over the next decade. We've also restored a sense of honesty and transparency to our budget, which is why this one accounts for spending that was hidden or left out under the old rules.

I realize that passing this budget won't be easy. Because it represents real and dramatic change, it also represents a threat to the status quo in Washington. I know that the insurance industry won't like the idea that they'll have to bid competitively to continue offering Medicare coverage, but that's how we'll help preserve and protect Medicare and lower health care costs for American families. I know that banks and big student lenders won't like the idea that we're ending their huge taxpayer subsidies, but that's how we'll save taxpayers nearly $50 billion and make college more affordable. I know that oil and gas companies won't like us ending nearly $30 billion in tax breaks, but that's how we'll help fund a renewable energy economy that will create new jobs and new industries. In other words, I know these steps won't sit well with the special interests and lobbyists who are invested in the old ways of doing business, and I know they're gearing up for a fight as we speak. My message to them is this: So am I.

The system we have now might work for the powerful and well-connected interests that have run Washington for far too long, but I don't. I work for the American people. I didn't come

here to do the same thing we've been doing or to take small steps forward, I came to provide the sweeping change that this country demanded when it went to the polls in November. That is the change this budget starts to make, and that is the change I'll be fighting for in the weeks ahead—change that will grow our economy, expand our middle class, and keep the American Dream alive for all those men and women who have believed in this journey from the day it began.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:35 p.m. on February 27 in the Library at the White House for broadcast on February 28. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 27 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 28.

Remarks on the Nomination of Governor Kathleen Sebelius To Be Secretary of Health and Human Services and Nancy-Ann DeParle To Be Director of the White House Office for Health Reform

March 2, 2009

The President. Hello, everybody. Last week, I unveiled a fiscal blueprint for America's future, one that reflects the stark reality of our financial crisis while laying a lasting foundation for our common prosperity. It makes both the sacrifices and the investments necessary to tackle the great challenges of our time, challenges we face today as a consequence of decisions we deferred yesterday. And one of these great challenges is health care.

The good news is that we have already done more to advance the cause of health care reform in the last month than we have in the last decade. We've provided and protected health insurance for 11 million children whose parents work full time. We've invested in preventive care to help keep people from having to go to the doctor in the first place, and in electronic health records and new technology that will ensure privacy while saving billions of dollars and countless lives.

And today I can announce that under the recovery plan we've put into action, $155 million will go toward supporting 126 new health centers across America. These health centers will expand access to care by helping people in need—many with no health insurance—obtain access to comprehensive primary and preventive health care services. That helps relieve the burden on emergency rooms across the country, which have become primary care clinics for too many who lack coverage, often at taxpayer expense. This action will create thousands of new jobs, help provide health care to an estimated 750,000 low-income Americans across the country, and take another important step toward affordable, accessible health care for all.

But our current economic crisis has only heightened the urgency of our health care challenge. In the last 8 years, premiums have grown four times faster than wages. In each of these years, 1 million Americans have lost their health insurance. The crushing cost of health care causes a bankruptcy in America every 30 seconds; and by the end of this year, it could cause 1.5 million Americans to lose their homes. It's a crisis punishing families, battering businesses, squeezing our States, and increasingly, imperiling our own budget. Health care is one of the fastest-growing expenses in the Federal budget, and it's one we simply cannot sustain.

That is why we cannot fail to act yet again. If we're going to help families, save businesses, and improve the long-term economic health of our Nation, we must realizing that fixing what's wrong with our health care system is no longer just a moral imperative, but a fiscal imperative. Health care reform that reduces costs while expanding coverage is no longer just a dream we hope to achieve, it's a necessity we have to achieve.

Today I'm proud to announce key members of the team I'm assembling to help do just that: Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius for my Secretary of Health and Human Services and Nancy-Ann DeParle as Director of the White House Office for Health Reform.

Now, there's no easy formula for fixing our health care system. There will be many different opinions and ideas about how to achieve this reform. And that's why I'm bringing together business and labor, doctors and insurers, Democrats and Republicans, as well as ordinary Americans from all walks of life to the White House this Thursday for a historic health care forum.

What is required, however, is a commitment to reform that focuses not on Democratic ideas or Republican ideas, but on ideas that work to rein in costs, expand access, and improve the quality of health care for the American people.

Kathleen Sebelius embodies such a commitment to bipartisan accomplishment. She is, after all, the daughter of a Democratic Governor and the daughter-in-law of a Republican Congressman. But she's forged a reputation for bipartisan problem-solving in her own right. As Governor of Kansas, she inherited a billion-dollar deficit, but by eliminating waste and inefficiency while making smart choices, she balanced the State budget without raising taxes. And time and again, on energy and education, jobs and health care, she's bridged the partisan divide and worked with a Republican legislature to get things done for the people of Kansas.

And that's why I'm so proud that one of the most esteemed political leaders of our time, Bob Dole, is here, as well as my former colleague, Pat Roberts, here as well—people in Kansas, we stick together. And I've got my own Kansas roots here, so I'm particularly pleased to be joined by so many Kansans.

Now, Kathleen has—also knows health care inside and out. She's won praise for her expertise from stakeholders across the spectrum, from consumer groups to insurers. Over 8 years as State insurance commissioner, she refused campaign contributions from insurance companies and protected the people of Kansas from increases to their premiums by blocking a takeover of the State's largest insurer. She helped draft a proposed national bill of rights for patients and served as the president of the National Association of Insurance Commissioners.

And as a Governor she's been on the frontlines of our health care crisis. She has a deep knowledge of what the burden of crushing costs does to our families and businesses. That's why she fought to guarantee Kansans access to quality, affordable health care, and sought to secure it for every Kansas child from birth to age 5.

Kathleen has a remarkable intellect, unquestioned integrity, and the kind of pragmatic wisdom you'll tend to find in a Kansan. I know she will bring some much needed grace and good humor to Washington, and she will be a tremendous asset to my Cabinet.

Now, as critical as the task of health care reform is, Governor Sebelius will also oversee a Department with wide-ranging responsibilities essential to the well-being of the American people. We rely on the Food and Drug Administration to ensure the safety of our Nation's food and drug supply. We depend on the Center for Disease Control to make certain our Nation is prepared for pandemic disease outbreak or bioterrorism attacks. We expect the National Institutes of Health to keep America at the forefront of medical research, and work toward a cure for cancer in our time. And for as long as I am President, these agencies will be led by exceptional individuals who stand on the side of the American people; who push politics aside in favor of proven science; who eschew stale ideology for sound ideas and a focus on what works.

I'm also proud to announce that Kathleen will have an excellent partner at the White House in Nancy, one of the Nation's leading experts on health care and regulatory issues. As commissioner of the Department of Human Services in Tennessee, she saw firsthand our health care system's impact on workers and families. In the Clinton administration, she handled budget matters for Federal health care programs, and took on the tremendous task of managing Medicare and Medicaid. I have absolute confidence in her ability to lead the public and legislative effort to ensure quality, affordable health care for every American.

Let me close by saying one last thing. I realize that there are those who simply don't

believe Washington can bring about this change. And the odds are long. It's failed too many times. There are too many special interests and entrenched lobbyists invested in the status quo.

That's the conventional wisdom, and I understand those doubts. But I also know this: I didn't come to Washington to take the easy route, or to work for the powerful and the well-connected interests who have run this city for too long. I came here to work for the American people. I came here to deliver the sweeping change that they demanded when they went to the polls in November.

Kathleen and Nancy share my resolve; I look forward to working with them as we begin the urgent and immediate task of ensuring quality, affordable health care for every American. And we also know that we're going to need important partners there, so that's why I'm so proud that we have the outstanding Member of the House of Representatives, Henry Waxman, and my own colleague and the head of the finance committee, Max Baucus—they have already shown extraordinary leadership in this process.

The fact that we've got Democrats and Republicans here I hope is a symbol of how we can move this issue forward. I don't think anybody has a silver bullet when it comes to health care. There are some difficult tradeoffs to be made; there are some difficult choices to be made. But what I do know is this: that people of goodwill collectively recognize that the path we're on is unsustainable. It's going to be Kathleen's job and Nancy's job to work with extraordinary leaders, like the ones on this stage, to make sure that we finally deliver health care reform that will save our Federal budget and help American families for generations to come.

Thank you very much.

All right. Kathleen.

[*At this point, Secretary-designate Sebelius made brief remarks.*]

The President. Thank you. You are going to be great.

Secretary-designate Sebelius. Yes, thank you.

The President. Nancy, you want to say a little something? Go ahead.

[*Director-designate DeParle made brief remarks.*]

The President. All right. Thank you, everybody. We're going to go get to work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:57 p.m. in East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Gov. John J. Gilligan of Ohio, father of Secretary-designate Sebelius; and former Sen. Robert J. Dole. The transcript released by the Office of the press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary-designate Sebelius and Director-designate DeParle.

Remarks at the Department of Transportation
March 3, 2009

Thank you, DOT. Thank you very much. Please have a seat. Thank you. Vice President Biden; Secretary LaHood; our cochairs of the TIGER team, Lana Hurdle and Joel Szabat; thank you all for the extraordinary work that you guys are doing each and every day.

I want to begin with some plain talk: The economy's performance in the last quarter of 2008 was the worst in over 25 years. And, frankly, the first quarter of this year holds out little promise for better returns.

From Wall Street to Main Street to kitchen tables all across America, our economic challenge is clear. And now it is up to us to meet it.

One of the challenges is to jump-start lending, so businesses and families can finance the purchases of everything from inventory and payroll to a home, a car, or a college education. We have to jump-start the credit markets and get private lending going again. No matter how good of a job we do here, that's going to be critical. And that's why the Treasury and

the Federal Reserve are launching today the Consumer and Business Lending Initiative, which, when fully implemented, will generate up to a trillion dollars of new lending for the American people. And this will help unlock our frozen credit markets, which is absolutely essential for economic recovery.

But we also know that there cannot be a sustained recovery unless and until we put Americans back to work and put money in their pockets.

Two weeks ago, I signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the most sweeping economic recovery plan in history. And already, its impact is being felt across this Nation. Hard-working families can now worry a little less about next month's bills because of the tax cut they'll soon find in the mail. Renewable energy companies that were once downsizing are now finding ways to expand. And transportation projects that were once on hold are now starting up again, as part of the largest new investment in America's infrastructure since President Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System.

Of the 3½ million jobs that will be created and saved over the next 2 years as a result of this recovery plan, 400,000 will be jobs rebuilding our crumbling roads, bridges, and schools, repairing our faulty levees and dams, connecting nearly every American to broadband, and upgrading the buses and trains that commuters take every day. Many of these projects will be coordinated by Secretary LaHood and all of you at the Department of Transportation. And I want you to know that the American public is grateful to public servants like you, men and women whose work isn't always recognized, but whose jobs are critical to our Nation's safety, security, and prosperity. You have never been more important than you are right now, and for that we are all grateful.

Now, in the coming days and weeks, my administration will be announcing more details about the kinds of transportation projects that will be launched as part of the recovery plan. But today I want to speak about an investment we are making in one part of our infrastructure. Through the Recovery Act, we will be investing $28 billion in our highways, money that every one of our 50 States can start using immediately to put people back to work. It's an investment being made at an unprecedented pace, thanks in large part to Joe Biden, who's leading the effort to get the money out the door quickly. Because of Joe, and because of all the Governors and mayors, county and city officials who are helping implement this plan, I can say that 14 days after I signed our Recovery Act into law, we are seeing shovels hit the ground.

As Secretary LaHood noted, the first contract will be awarded to American Infrastructure, a family business in Pennsylvania that will be resurfacing a road in Maryland. More than 100 other people will begin receiving funds today as well. Over the next few weeks, we will launch more than 200 construction projects across this country, fueling growth in an industry that's been hard hit by our economic crisis.

Altogether, this investment in highways will create or save 150,000 jobs by the end of next year, most of them in the private sector. And just to give you a sense of perspective, that's more jobs being created or saved in one year than GM, Ford, and Chrysler have lost in manufacturing over the past 3 years combined. The jobs that we're creating are good jobs that pay more than average, jobs grinding asphalt and paving roads, filling potholes, making street signs, repairing stop lights, replacing guard rails.

But what makes this investment so important is not simply that we will jump-start job creation or reduce the congestion that costs us nearly $80 billion a year or rebuild the aging roads that cost drivers billions more a year in upkeep. What makes it so important is that by investing in roads that have earned a grade of D-minus by America's leading civil engineers—roads that should have been rebuilt long ago—we can save some 14,000 men and women who lose their lives each year due to bad roads and driving conditions. Like a broken levee or a bridge with a shaky foundation, poor roads are a public hazard, and we have a responsibility to fix them.

Now, we have another responsibility. Having inherited a trillion-dollar deficit that we're working to cut in half, we also need to ensure that tax dollars aren't wasted on projects that don't deliver results. And that's why, as part of

his duty, Joe will keep an eye on how precious tax dollars are being spent. To you, he's Mr. Vice President, but around the White House we call him the sheriff—[*laughter*]—because if you're misusing taxpayer money, you'll have to answer to him.

And to help him, I've appointed a proven and aggressive Inspector General to root out waste and fraud. And I'm also deputizing every single American to visit a new web site called recovery.gov, so you can see where your tax dollars are going and hold us accountable for results.

We're also making it easier for Americans to see what projects are being funded with their money as part of our recovery. So in the weeks to come, the signs denoting these projects are going to bear the new emblem of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. That's it right there. Transportation projects will be stamped with another emblem as well. These emblems are symbols of our commitment to you, the American people—a commitment to investing your tax dollars wisely, to put Americans to work doing the work that needs to be done. So when you see them on projects that your tax dollars made possible, let it be a reminder that our Government—your Government—is doing its part to put the economy back on the road of recovery.

And so, in the days and years ahead, as you're driving on new roads or roads that are newly paved, I hope it will give you some measure of satisfaction to know that it was all done by putting your fellow citizens to work. I hope it will give you a sense of pride to know that even as we pursued our economic recovery, we renewed our American landscape.

Throughout our history, there have been times when a generation of Americans seized the chance to remake the face of this Nation. It's what we did in the midst of civil war by connecting our coasts with the transcontinental railroad. It's what we did in the midst of depression by putting up a golden bridge in San Francisco, and electrifying rural America, and completing a great dam in the Southwest. It's what we're doing once more, by building a 21st century infrastructure that will make America's economy stronger and America's people safer.

That's the reason we're here today. That's the purpose of our recovery plan. That's the cause of my Presidency, and I need it to be your cause as well. Each and every one of you have a role to play.

There are those out there who say this can't be done, it can't be done efficiently, it can't be done effectively. We've gone through a lot of years where we were told what government cannot do. Government can't do anything by itself; we've got to have the private sector involved. But there are critical things the Government can do, right here at the Department of Transportation.

Each and every one of you have a critical role to play. And if you do your work, if you do your job as well as you can do, if you feel as inspired as I do about the work that lies ahead, I'm absolutely confident that we're going to look back on this time and say to ourselves this was a moment where we really made a difference. What an extraordinary opportunity that is. I hope all of you seize it.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 10 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Lana T. Hurdle, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Budget and Programs, and Joel Szabat, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy, Department of Transportation; and Interior Department Inspector General Earl E. Devaney, Chair, Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board. The transcript released by the Office of the press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom and an Exchange With Reporters
March 3, 2009

President Obama. Hello, everybody. Good to see you. Where are the Brits?

Prime Minister Brown. We're over here, sir.

President Obama. They're over there.

Prime Minister Brown. In fact, Barack, they're everywhere. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. Are they? They're spread out?

All right, my understanding is we're going to do four questions, and we'll just alternate. I'll start off with Jennifer Loven of the AP [Associated Press].

Missile Defense Shield/Russia-U.S. Relations

Q. Thank you, sir. I'd like to ask you about the letter that you've written to the Russian President about the anti-missile shield in Eastern Europe. Can you just talk about why sort of a quid pro quo seemed like the smartest approach?

President Obama. You know, I think that the report that was in The New York Times didn't accurately characterize the letter. What we had was a very lengthy letter talking about a whole range of issues from nuclear proliferation to how are we going to deal with a set of common security concerns along the Afghan border and terrorism. And what I said in the letter is the same thing that I've said publicly, which is that the missile defense that we have talked about deploying is directed towards not Russia but Iran. That has always been the concern, that you had potentially a missile from Iran that threatened either the United States or Europe.

And what I said in the letter was that, obviously, to the extent that we are lessening Iran's commitment to nuclear weapons, then that reduces the pressure for or the need for a missile defense system.

In no way does that in any—does that diminish my commitment to making sure that Poland, the Czech Republic, and other NATO members are fully enjoying the partnership of the Alliance and U.S. support with respect to their security.

So the way it got characterized I think was as some sort of quid pro quo. It was simply a statement of fact that I've made previously, which is, is that the missile defense program, to the extent that it is deployed, is designed to deal with not a Russian threat but a Iranian threat.

Q. What kind of response have you received from Russia?

President Obama. Well, we've had a good exchange between ourselves and the Russians. I've said that we need to reset or reboot the relationship there. Russia needs to understand our unflagging commitment to the independence and security of countries like a Poland or a Czech Republic. On the other hand, we have areas of common concern. And I cited two examples: the issue of nuclear nonproliferation and the issue of terrorism. And at this point, I think we probably have some potential common concerns on the world economic front as well.

So my hope is, is that we can have a constructive relationship where, based on common respect and mutual interest, we can move forward.

Prime Minister Brown. Nick.

United Kingdom-U.S. Relations

Q. Nick Robinson, BBC News. Mr. President, it's often been said that you, unlike many of your predecessors, have not looked toward Europe, let alone Britain. Can you just respond to that comment? And also, the Prime Minister is talking to you about a global New Deal today. Will that actually help hard-pressed American consumers?

And if I may briefly put a question to the Prime Minister.

President Obama. Well, first of all, the special relationship between the United States and Great Britain is one that is not just important to me, it's important to the American people. And it is sustained by a common language, a common culture; our legal system is directly inherited from the English system; our system of government reflects many of these same values.

So—and by the way, that's also where my mother's side of my family came from.

So I think this notion that somehow there is any lessening of that special relationship is misguided. Great Britain is one of our closest, strongest allies, and there is a link, a bond there that will not break. And I think that's true not only on the economic front, but also on issues of common security.

And in our conversations here, we talked not only about the need to coordinate around economic policy, but also I expressed to the Prime Minister America's extraordinary gratitude for their support in our efforts in Afghanistan and the young men and women of Great Britain who have made enormous sacrifices there. Although there was a debate, obviously, around the issue of Iraq, nevertheless, whether you were for or against the war here in the United States, the recognition of Great Britain's friendship and standing tall with us during that period is something that will never be forgotten.

And so rest assured that the relationship is not only special and strong, but will only get stronger as time goes on.

Prime Minister Brown. Let me just thank President Obama for his welcome, for his hospitality, for his leadership of his country and the inspiration he's giving the world at this very difficult time.

And I've come here to renew our special relationship for new times. It's a partnership of purpose. It's a partnership of purpose that is born out of shared values. It's a partnership of purpose that is founded on a determination to rise to every challenge. And I think it's a partnership of purpose that is driven forward now by the need for us all to work together in unity to deal with the world economic problems.

And I'm grateful for the conversations I'm having with President Obama about this and about other things. And I'm grateful, too, that Michelle and Sarah will be meeting later this afternoon, and I know they'll have an enjoyable time as well.

President Obama. Absolutely. Okay.

International Financial System/Financial Markets

Q. Prime Minister, your Chancellor has said overnight that it is our collective responsibility, all of us have to have the humility to accept that over the last few years things have got out of alignment. Is that a form of apology from the Government? Are you apologizing for the problems that there have been over the past 10 years in the financial system?

Prime Minister Brown. Well, there's got to be deep regulatory change. We've just been talking, Barack and I, about the need for proper supervision of shadow banking systems, of areas where there was bank practices that were unacceptable, where remuneration policies got out of hand and weren't based on long-term success but on short-term deals. And these are the changes that we've already announced that we are going to make.

So we've learned from what has happened over these last 10 years. Things have happened in every part of the world that we're having to learn about, as well, and you've got an international financial system that we've now got to show can be brought to work in the public interest.

So every country is learning and every country is taking action. And what we are talking about today is how by us taking action, Britain and America, we can help other countries that join us in making for a more stable and effective financial system.

President Obama. Caren [Caren Bohan, Reuters].

Financial Markets/International Financial System

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. The stock market has fallen to lows since—it's not seen since 1997 this week, and an undercurrent of these declines is the fear that your plans to fix the banking sector might not work. And I'm wondering if you could talk about your plans and whether you think you can give reassurances that they will, in fact, work.

And, Prime Minister Brown, I wanted your view on whether you think your two countries

have a handle on the banking sector problems that are affecting both your countries.

President Obama. Well, let me say this: I'm absolutely confident that they will work. And I'm absolutely confident that credit is going to be flowing again, that businesses are going to start seeing opportunities for investment, they're going to start hiring again, people are going to be put back to work.

What I'm looking at is not the day-to-day gyrations of the stock market, but the long-term ability for the United States and the entire world economy to regain its footing. And, you know, the stock market is sort of like a tracking poll in politics. It bobs up and down day to day, and if you spend all your time worrying about that, then you're probably going to get the long-term strategy wrong.

Now, having said that, the banking system has been dealt a heavy blow. It has to do with many of the things that Prime Minister Brown alluded to: lax regulation, massive over leverage, huge systemic risks taken by unregulated institutions, as well as regulated institutions. And so there are a lot of losses that are working their way through the system. And it's not surprising that the market is hurting as a consequence. In fact, I think what we're seeing is that as people absorb the depths of the problem that existed in the banking system, as well as the international ramifications of it, that there's going to be a natural reaction.

On the other hand, what you're now seeing is profit and earning ratios are starting to get to the point where buying stocks is a potentially good deal if you've got a long-term perspective on it. I think that consumer confidence—as they see the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act taking root, businesses are starting to see opportunities for investment and potential hiring; we are going to start creating jobs again.

One of the things that Prime Minister Brown and I talked about is how can we coordinate so that all the G–20 countries, all the major countries around the world, in a coordinated fashion, are stimulating their economies; how can we make sure that there are a common set of principles, in terms of how we're approaching banking, so that problems that exist in emerging markets like Hungary or the Ukraine don't have these enormous ripple effects that wash back onto our shores, and we're providing them with some help in a coordinated international fashion as well.

All those steps, I think, are going to slowly build confidence. But it's not going to happen overnight. And my main message to the American people is to just recognize that we dug a very deep hole for ourselves; there were a lot of bad decisions that were made; we are cleaning up that mess. It's going to be sort of full of fits and starts in terms of getting the mess cleaned up, but it's going to get cleaned up. And we are going to recover, and we are going to emerge more prosperous, more unified, and I think more protected from systemic risk, having learned these lessons, than we were before.

Prime Minister Brown. I think President Obama is absolutely right. And I think the history books will record that what he has done in his first, well, nearly 50 days of office has been momentous in setting the means by which we can see the economic recovery happening.

We've had a global banking failure, and it's happened in every part of the world. It's almost like a power cut that went right across the financial system. And we have got to rebuild that financial system. We've got to isolate the bad assets. We've got to underwrite the financial system so that loans can start again to businesses and then families. And we've got to get enough lending into the economy so that people—enough credit so that people are able to go about their normal business again.

And that's why we're looking ahead to the G–20 in London in April, because a bad bank anywhere can affect good banks everywhere. So we've got to root out the problems that exist in other parts of the world as well, set principles with the banking system for the future, and make sure that the banks subscribe to lending agreements where they actually increase the lending that is available to citizens in every country.

President Obama. Yes. One last one.

Prime Minister Brown. Tom.

The President's Relationship With Prime Minister Brown/International Financial System

Q. Tom Bradby from ITV News. Prime Minister, Mr. President, should all governments at this point acknowledge mistakes of policy and regulation in the past? Would that be helpful or unhelpful, in general? And can I just ask you, an awful lot of ink is used describing the individual relationships between Prime Ministers and Presidents. Could I just ask you to describe how at this point you find working with each other?

President Obama. Well, I will say that this is my third meeting with Prime Minister Brown, and I'd like to think that our relationship is terrific. And I'm sure he won't dispute me, in front of me anyway. [*Laughter*] No, look, I think that the Prime Minister has taken the helm of the British economy at a very difficult time. As he noted, I've just come in recently. But I think that there are a set of shared values and shared assumptions between us: that we believe in the free market; we believe in a government that is not overbearing and allows entrepreneurs and businesses to thrive. But we also share a common belief that there have to be sufficient regulatory structures in place so that the market doesn't spin out of control.

I think, on the international front, we have a shared world view that it is important for us to be true to our values and ideals of rule of law, of a belief in human rights, a belief in our democratic practices, but that we also have to be respectful around the world and to listen and not simply dictate; that in this new world that we live in, that the way to get things done is to build partnerships and alliances, as opposed to acting unilaterally.

So I think both on the economy and both—and on foreign policy, we've got a shared world view that allows us to work together very effectively. And he also has a wonderful family, as I do. [*Laughter*] So we can always talk about our spectacular wives and our wonderful children.

With respect to the first part of your question, look, I think there is no doubt that, setting aside who's to blame, that in the past there have been some mistakes and lessons learned in terms of how we deal with the financial sector. Globalization can be an enormous force for good. And one of the things that we've talked about repeatedly is that countries in this crisis cannot start turning inward and try to erect protectionist barriers. We should encourage trade. The fact that we have a global capital system allows money to flow to areas that previously couldn't get capital. That allows them to develop and to grow. That can grow the economy worldwide, increase trade, and that potentially benefits everybody.

But what is also true is, is that when you've got trillions of dollars that can now move at the speed of light, when you've got a whole series of unregulated pools of dollars outside of the banking system, but we still have a 1930s regulatory system in place in most countries designed from the last great crisis, that we've got to update our institutions, our regulatory frameworks, so that the power of globalization is channeled for the benefit of ordinary men and women, so that they have jobs, they can purchase a home, they can send their children to college, and prosper and thrive, and that the benefits of globalization aren't just for a small handful of people who are not accountable.

And that's the kind of transformation that we're obviously trying to bring about here in the United States, and I suspect that that's a view that Gordon shares.

Prime Minister Brown. Yes, Tom, I've enjoyed every conversation that we've had, both on the telephone and when we've met. I don't think I could ever compete with you at basketball—perhaps tennis.

President Obama. Tennis, I hear you got a game.

Prime Minister Brown. Yes, we could maybe have a——

President Obama. We haven't tried it yet.

Prime Minister Brown. I don't know if you—I think you'd be better. But there we are.

As far as the common interests that we're pursuing, look, there is the possibility in the next few months of a global New Deal that will involve all the countries of the world in sorting out and cleaning up the banking system. And there is the possibility of all the different countries of the world coming together to agree the expansion in the economy that is necessary to both restore confidence and to give people jobs and growth and prosperity for the future.

And there is the possibility of the international institutions for the first time being reformed in such a way that they can do the job that people want them to do and deal with some of the problems that exist in the poorest countries of the world. And there's a chance also that the recovery that we're talking about can be a green recovery, a low-carbon recovery, where each country in different parts of the world can work on this together.

So the opportunities are there. I've said to the President that almost every leader I meet wants the best possible relationship and the most—highest degree of cooperation for the future.

And so the challenges are momentous and global. The response of leaders around the world is to want to work together. And I believe that we can make a contribution not just to each of our own economies, but make a contribution to the world economy, helping each economy if we can actually work together. And that's why our talk about the G–20 is very important. We hope to make progress on April the 2d.

And as far as regulation, I want the regulatory system to be reformed to meet the needs of our times. When we made changes in 1997, we made changes for the times of 1997. The financial markets have moved global since then, and we need a global means of bringing people together so there's proper supervision of the system. You don't want shadow banking systems. You don't want regulatory tax havens. So we've got to act as a world together to deal with that. And that's one of the things we'll be talking about in April in London.

Terror Attack in Pakistan/Global Terrorism/Afghanistan

Q. Can you just talk about the Pakistan terror attack today on the cricket team? You, in particular, Mr. President, have made it clear that you've got to see Afghanistan and Pakistan together. How do you think that the world community can support Pakistan?

President Obama. Well, the details are still coming in, and so I don't want to be too specific.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

President Obama. Well, obviously, we're deeply concerned. But let me just make a general statement: Both Great Britain and the United States share a deep interest in ensuring that neither Afghanistan nor Pakistan are safe havens for terrorist activity.

And we have coordinated effectively in the past. But the truth is, is that the situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated. The safe havens for Al Qaida remain in the frontier regions of Pakistan. And we are conducting currently a comprehensive review of our policies with respect to Afghanistan, with respect to Pakistan, our coordination with our NATO allies and other members of the international security forces that are there. I will be making a series of announcements prior to the NATO summit that immediately follows the G–20 summit, in terms of the direction that the United States would like to go.

What I'm confident in is that our strongest partner in that effort once again will be the United Kingdom and the Prime Minister sitting next to me.

Okay, thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:58 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sarah Brown, wife, and John and Fraser, sons, of Prime Minister Brown. Reporters referred to President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia; and Chancellor of the Exchequer Alistair M. Darling of the United Kingdom.

Remarks on the 160th Anniversary of the Department of the Interior
March 3, 2009

Thank you very much. Please have a seat. Thank you, Ken—thank you, Mr. Secretary. It is my honor to join you and the hard-working public servants here at the Department of the Interior as we mark a milestone in the distinguished history of this Department.

As Ken mentioned, 160 years ago today, with the tally of a contentious vote, amidst growing tensions between North and South, as our Nation expanded westward, a deeply divided Senate passed the bill that created the Department of the Interior.

The Department was born less of a singular purpose than of a multitude of needs; it was founded to serve a growing nation whose roles and responsibilities were growing as well. The Department even earned a nickname, "The Department of Everything Else." [*Laughter*]

Yet, throughout our history, as Interior has performed a set of ever-changing and often unrelated duties, an overarching mission has emerged: to defend the natural bounty of this country and the welfare of its people. As Secretary Salazar has said, you have become the "Department of America."

For the services you provide touch the lives of all Americans, from the clean water we drink to the clean energy we must generate; from historic monuments and museums that educate and inspire to the vast wilderness that each new generation can discover and explore. You manage 500 million acres of land, or roughly one-fifth of the area of the United States, and 1.7 billion acres offshore.

It was under this Department—it was this Department under President Teddy Roosevelt that helped lead an unprecedented effort to protect our natural resources. It was under this Department, under President Franklin Roosevelt, that Secretary Harold Ickes supervised the Civilian Conservation Corps to help us overcome the Great Depression.

And your mission is more important than ever before. The Interior Department manages the land on which 30 percent of the Nation's energy is produced. So you have a major role to play, all of you, in our clean energy future. The Nation is depending on you to help us end the tyranny of foreign oil and become energy independent by harnessing the wind and the sun, our water, our soil, and American innovation.

That's why I'm proud to join you this afternoon. That's why I am pleased that this Department is in the capable hands of my great friend Ken Salazar. And that is why the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act creates jobs by making historic investments in the Department of the Interior.

This plan will provide more than $3 billion to the Department to create jobs doing the work that America needs you to do. It will create jobs increasing our capacity to generate renewable energy on public lands and retrofitting facilities to be far more energy efficient. It will provide for the renovation of laboratories and the replacement of research equipment that in some cases is half a century old.

We'll fund the long-delayed work to preserve our natural wonders and historic landmarks, from Yellowstone National Park to the Statue of Liberty. And we will invest in the roads on which 275 million visitors travel to reach these sites across our country.

We'll provide clean, reliable drinking water to rural areas, promote water conservation, repair aging water infrastructure.

And the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will rebuild and remodel schools on Indian reservations across this country, while providing more than $100 million in loans to spur job creation in the Indian economy.

Under the leadership of Secretary Salazar, these investments will be made with unprecedented oversight. In the past, as all of you know, we've seen lapses that have damaged the reputation of this Department, despite the integrity and faithful service of the vast majority of people who work here. In just these first 5 weeks, Secretary Salazar has helped bring about a new era of responsibility and accountability. It is in this spirit that my recovery plan is being implemented.

Finally, today I've signed a memorandum that will help restore the scientific process to its rightful place at the heart of the Endangered Species Act, a process undermined by past administrations. The work of scientists and experts in my administration, including right here in the Interior Department, will be respected. For more than three decades, the Endangered Species Act has successfully protected our Nation's most threatened wildlife, and we should be looking for ways to improve it, not weaken it.

Throughout our history, there's been a tension between those who've sought to conserve our natural resources for the benefit of future generations, and those who have sought to profit from these resources. But I'm here to tell you this is a false choice. With smart, sustainable policies, we can grow our economy today and preserve the environment for ourselves, our children, and our grandchildren. That is what we must do.

For you know, you know that our long-term prosperity depends upon the faithful stewardship of the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the land that we sow. That's a sacred trust, the importance of which cannot be measured merely by the acres we protect, the miles of rivers we preserve, the energy we draw from public lands.

It's a child wandering amidst ancient redwoods, a love for science stirred as she looks skyward. It's a young man running his hand along the walls at Ellis Island, where his grandmother once carried her every possession and the hope of a new life. It's a family hiking along canyons carved by ancient floods, or mountains shaped by shifting continents, finding peace in the beauty of the natural world. These are experiences that enrich our lives and remind us of the blessings that we share.

And that was certainly the case for me. As many of you know, I spent much of my childhood in Hawaii, a place of extraordinary beauty and—[*applause*]—we've got a Hawaiian in there—[*laughter*]—a place of extraordinary beauty, and one that's home to several national parks and historic sites. But before my 11th birthday, my grandmother decided it was time for me to see the mainland.

So my grandmother, my mother, my sister and I all flew to Seattle. And we drove down the coast along the coast of California, and then east to the Grand Canyon. We headed across the Great Plains and to the Great Lakes, before heading back West through Yellowstone.

That was an experience I will never forget. It's an experience I want for my daughters, and for all of our daughters and sons, to see the incredible beauty of this Nation. It's an experience that's only possible because of the work you do each and every day.

So thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:13 p.m. at the Interior Department. In his remarks, he referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Zimbabwe
March 3, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, stating that the national emergency with respect to the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Zimbabwe and other persons to undermine Zimbabwe's democratic processes or institutions is to continue in effect beyond March 6, 2009.

The crisis constituted by the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of

Zimbabwe and other persons to undermine Zimbabwe's democratic processes or institutions has not been resolved. These actions and policies pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the foreign policy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue this national emergency and to maintain in force the sanctions to respond to this threat.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
March 3, 2009.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 4. The notice of March 3 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Message to the Congress Certifying Exports to the People's Republic of China
March 3, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

In accordance with the provisions of section 1512 of the Strom Thurmond National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999 (Public Law 105–261), I hereby certify to the Congress that the export of two environmental chambers to be used to test automotive parts is not detrimental to the U.S. space launch industry, and that the material and equipment, including any indirect technical benefit that could be derived from this export, will not measurably improve the missile or space launch capabilities of the People's Republic of China.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
March 3, 2009.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 4.

Remarks on Government Contracting
March 4, 2009

Good morning. Even if these were the best of times, budget reform would be long overdue in Washington, and we have here some folks who have been working on these issues for a long time. But these are far from the best of times. By any measure, my administration inherited a fiscal disaster. When we walked in the door, we found a budget deficit of $1.3 trillion, the largest in American history. And this fiscal burden has been compounded by the most severe economic crisis since the Great Depression. It's a crisis that requires us to take swift and aggressive action to put Americans back to work and to make the long-delayed investments in energy, health care, and education that can build a new foundation for growth.

As we get our economy moving, we must also turn the tide on an era of fiscal irresponsibility so that we can sustain our recovery, enhance accountability, and avoid leaving our children a mountain of debt. And that's why even as we make the necessary investments to put our economy back on track, we're proposing significant changes that will help bring the yawning deficits we inherited under control. We are cutting what we don't need to make room for what we do.

The budget plan I outlined last week includes $2 trillion in deficit reduction. It reduces discretionary spending for nondefense programs as a share of the economy that—by more than 10 percent over the next decade, to the lowest level in nearly half a century. I want to repeat that. I want to make sure everybody catches this, because I think sometimes the chatter on the cable stations hasn't been clear about this. My budget reduces discretionary

spending for nondefense programs as a share of the economy by more than 10 percent over the next decade, and it will take it to the lowest level in nearly half a century.

In addition, today I'm announcing that part of this deficit reduction will include reforms in how government does business, which will save the American people up to $40 billion each year. It starts with reforming our broken system of Government contracting. There is a fundamental public trust that we must uphold. The American people's money must be spent to advance their priorities, not to line the pockets of contractors or to maintain projects that don't work.

Recently that public trust has not always been kept. Over the last 8 years, Government spending on contracts has doubled to over half a trillion dollars. Far too often, the spending is plagued by massive cost overruns, outright fraud, and the absence of oversight and accountability. In some cases, contracts are awarded without competition. In others, contractors actually oversee other contractors. We are spending money on things that we don't need, and we're paying more than we need to pay. And that's completely unacceptable.

This problem cuts across the Government, but I want to focus on one particular example, and that is the situation in defense contracting. Now, I want to be clear, as Commander in Chief, I will do whatever it takes to defend the American people, which is why we've increased funding for the best military in the history of the world. We'll make new investments in 21st century capabilities to meet new strategic challenges, and we will always give our men and women the—in uniform, the equipment and the support that they need to get the job done.

But I reject the false choice between securing this Nation and wasting billions of taxpayer dollars. And in this time of great challenges, I recognize the real choice between investments that are designed to keep the American people safe and those that are designed to make a defense contractor rich.

Last year, the Government Accountability Office, GAO, looked into 95 major defense projects and found cost overruns that totaled $295 billion. Let me repeat: That's $295 billion in wasteful spending. And this wasteful spending has many sources. It comes from investments and unproven technologies. It comes from a lack of oversight. It comes from influence peddling and indefensible no-bid contracts that have cost American taxpayers billions of dollars.

In Iraq, too much money has been paid out for services that were never performed, buildings that were never completed, companies that skimmed off the top. At home, too many contractors have been allowed to get away with delay after delay after delay in developing unproven weapon systems.

It's time for this waste and inefficiency to end. It's time for a Government that only invests in what works. And what's encouraging is, is that there is broad bipartisan consensus on behalf of reform, and we are committed to taking swift action that changes our system of contracting to save taxpayers' money.

So here are a couple of immediate steps we're going to take. First, with the Presidential memorandum that I'm signing, I am instructing my administration to dramatically reform the way we do business on contracts across the entire Government. So starting today, Peter Orszag, my budget director, will work with Cabinet officials and agency heads to develop tough new guidelines on contracting by the end of September. We will stop outsourcing services that should be performed by the Government and open up the contracting process to small businesses. We will end unnecessary no-bid and cost-plus contracts that run up a bill that is paid by the American people, and we will strengthen oversight to maximize transparency and accountability. Altogether, these reforms can save the American people up to $40 billion each year.

Second, we must make investments to keep our country safe while cutting back on the waste and inefficiency that isn't. And that's why I'm so pleased to support the goals of the bipartisan effort on procurement reform that has been led by our own Carl Levin and John McCain in the Senate. They have done extraordinary work trying to push this issue to the forefront. We want to see if we can partner with Senator McCain and Senator Levin to get this done as soon as

possible. And thanks to Secretary Gates, some of the reforms that they've talked about are already beginning to take shape. And I've asked him to work with Senators Levin and McCain on developing this legislation as it moves forward. And Bill Lynn, who is heading up procurement issues at our White House as Deputy Secretary of Defense, is going to be leading the charge on this as well.

I can assure you that this will be a priority for my administration. It's time to end the extra costs and long delays that are all too common in our defense contracting. We need to invest in technologies that are proven and cost-effective. We need more competition for contracts and more oversight as they're carried out. If a system isn't ready to be developed, we shouldn't pour resources into it. And if a system is plagued by cost overruns, it should be reformed. No more excuses, no more delays. The days of giving defense contractors a blank check are over.

Now, none of this will be easy. We'll have to end old ways of doing business. We'll have to take on entrenched special interests. We'll have to break bad habits that have built up over many years. But we can't keep spending good money after bad. All across America, families are making hard choices, and now we're going to have to do the same. I can promise you that this is just the beginning of a new way of doing business here in Washington, because the American people have every right to expect and to demand a Government that is more efficient, more accountable, and more responsible in keeping the public's trust.

And I also want to acknowledge a couple of Congressmen—Congressman Towns and Congressman Welch, who have been working diligently on this issue, and Claire McCaskill in the Senate, who has been sharpening her pencils and working with IGs across departments to see if we can make some significant reforms and improvements as well.

And again, thank you to Senators McCain and Senators Levin for their outstanding leadership on this issue. We look forward to getting it done. This is going to be just one more aspect of the kind of reform that's going to be critical in the months and years to come.

Thank you everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 a.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Peter R. Orszag, Director, Office of Management and Budget.

Remarks at a Dinner for Congressional Committee Chairs
March 4, 2009

Everybody, please be seated. Do not fear, no long speeches here. [*Laughter*] We just want to say welcome on behalf of Michelle and myself. We're so glad all of you could join us.

Obviously, the country is going through an extraordinarily difficult time, and we are going to have some monumental debates taking place over the next several months and years. We also know that we're not always going to agree on everything. But given how hard so many of you are working on both sides of the aisle, day in, day out, we thought it was important for us to be able to step back for a moment, remind ourselves that we have things in common—family, friends, laughter—and hopefully, we'll have a chance to appreciate each other a little bit, take a timeout before we dive back into the game.

So we hope you have a wonderful evening—not to mention the fact that this is a pretty big house, so we get lonely. [*Laughter*] So—and it's hard for me to move around out there sometimes so I've got to bring the world to me.

But, anyway, I'm grateful for all of you coming. Michelle is thrilled that you're here. And we hope you just have a wonderful evening.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:43 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Remarks at the Opening Session of the White House Forum on Health Reform

March 5, 2009

Everybody please have a seat. Thank you so much, Travis, for the wonderful introduction. Thank you for Melody Barnes, who has done more than anyone to help coordinate this forum and its extraordinary work, and so we appreciate her leadership.

We're here today to discuss one of the greatest threats not just to the well-being of our families and the prosperity of our businesses, but to the very foundation of our economy, and that's the exploding costs of health care in America today.

In the last 8 years, premiums have grown four times faster than wages. An additional 9 million Americans have joined the ranks of the uninsured. The cost of health care now causes a bankruptcy in America every 30 seconds. By the end of the year, it could cause 1.5 million Americans to lose their homes. Even for folks who are weathering this economic storm and have health care right now, all it takes is one stroke of bad luck—an accident or an illness, a divorce, a lost job—to become one of the nearly 46 million uninsured or the millions who have health care, but really can't afford what they've got.

We didn't get here by accident. The problems we face today are a direct consequence of actions that we failed to take yesterday. Since Teddy Roosevelt first called for reform nearly a century ago, we have talked, and we have tinkered. We have tried and fallen short. We've stalled for time, and again, we have failed to act because of Washington politics or industry lobbying. And today, there are those who say we should defer health care reform once again; that at a time of economic crisis, we simply can't afford to fix our health care system as well.

Well, let me be clear: The same soaring costs that are straining families' budgets are sinking our businesses and eating up our Government's budget too. Too many small businesses can't insure their employees. Major American corporations are struggling to compete with their foreign counterparts, and companies of all sizes are shipping their jobs overseas or shutting their doors for good. Medical—Medicare costs are consuming our Federal budget; I don't have to tell Members of Congress this. Medicaid is overwhelming our State budgets; I don't need to tell Governors and State legislatures that.

At the fiscal summit that we held here last week, the one thing on which everyone agreed was that the greatest threat to America's fiscal health is not Social Security, though that's a significant challenge; it's not the investments that we've made to rescue our economy during this crisis. By a wide margin, the biggest threat to our Nation's balance sheet is the skyrocketing cost of health care. It's not even close.

That's why we cannot delay this discussion any longer. That's why today's forum is so important. Because health care reform is no longer just a moral imperative, it's a fiscal imperative. If we want to create jobs and rebuild our economy and get our Federal budget under control, then we have to address the crushing cost of health care this year, in this administration. Making investments in reform now, investments that will dramatically lower costs, won't add to our budget deficits in the long term. Rather, it is one of the best ways—in fact maybe the only way—to reduce those long-term costs.

Now, I know people are skeptical about whether Washington can bring about this change. Our inability to reform health care in the past is just one example of how special interests have had their way and the public interest has fallen by the wayside. And I know people are afraid we'll draw the same old lines in the sand and give in to the same entrenched interests and arrive back at the same stalemate that we've been stuck in for decades.

But I am here today, and I believe you are here today, because this time is different. This time, the call for reform is coming from the bottom up and from all across the spectrum, from doctors, from nurses, from patients, from unions, from businesses, from hospitals, health care providers, community groups. It's coming from mayors and Governors and legislatures—Democrats, Republicans—all who are racing ahead of Washington to pass bold health

care initiatives on their own. This time, there is no debate about whether all Americans should have quality, affordable health care. The only question is, how?

And the purpose of this forum is to start answering that question, to determine how we lower costs for everyone, improve quality for everyone, and expand coverage to all Americans. And our goal will be to enact comprehensive health care reform by the end of this year. That is our commitment. That is our goal.

Now, in the past month alone, we've done a lot more to advance that goal than we've done in the past decade. We've provided and protected coverage for 11 million children from working families and for 7 million Americans who've lost their jobs in this downturn. We've made the largest investment in history in preventive care, invested in electronic medical records that will save money, ensure privacy, and save lives. We've launched a new effort to find a cure for cancer in our time. We've also set aside in our budget a health care reserve fund to finance comprehensive reform. I know that more will be required, but this is a significant downpayment that's fully paid for, does not add one penny to our deficit. And I look forward to working with Congress and the American people to get this budget passed.

Now, as we work to determine the details of health care reform, we won't always see eye to eye. We may disagree—and disagree strongly—about particular measures. But we know that there are plenty of areas of agreement as well, and that should serve as the starting points for our work.

We can all agree that if we want to bring down skyrocketing costs, we'll need to modernize our system and invest in prevention. We can agree that if we want greater accountability and responsibility, we have to ensure that people aren't overcharged for prescription drugs or discriminated against for preexisting conditions. And we need to eliminate fraud, waste, and abuse in Government programs. I think most of us would agree that if we want to cover all Americans, we can't make the mistake of trying to fix what isn't broken. So if somebody has insurance they like, they should be able to keep that insurance. If they have a doctor that they like, they should be able to keep their doctor. They should just pay less for the care that they receive.

And finally, we can all agree that if we want to translate these goals into policies, we need a process that is as transparent and inclusive as possible. And that's why I've asked all of you—representatives of organizations, interests, and parties from across the spectrum—to join us here today. In fact, this was the hottest ticket in town. [*Laughter*] That's why we asked concerned citizens like the folks on this stage to organize open meetings across America where people could air their views. As Travis said, more than 3,000 meetings were held in all 50 States and DC; more than 30,000 people attended. I thank them for their input and their ideas and look forward to reading the report that Travis has presented to me.

In this effort, every voice has to be heard, every idea must be considered, every option must be on the table. There should be no sacred cows. Each of us must accept that none of us will get everything that we want, and that no proposal for reform will be perfect. If that's the measure, we will never get anything done. But when it comes to addressing our health care challenge, we can no longer let the perfect be the enemy of the essential. And I don't think anybody would argue that we are on a sustainable path when it comes to health care.

Finally, I want to be very clear at the outset that while everyone has a right to take part in this discussion, nobody has the right to take it over and dominate. The status quo is the one option that's not on the table, and those who seek to block any reform at all—any reform at any costs—will not prevail this time around.

I didn't come here to Washington to work for those interests. I came here to work for the American people, the folks I met on the campaign trail, the people I hear from every single day in the White House. Folks who are working hard, making all the right decisions, but still face choices that no one in this country should have to make: how long to put off that doctor's appointment; whether to fill that prescription; when to give up and head to the

emergency room because there are no other options.

I've read some of the many letters they've sent asking me for help, and they're usually not asking for much. I don't get letters where people are just asking for a free ride, for a handout. Most of them are embarrassed about their situation; they would rather not have to ask for help. They start, usually, by saying that they've never written a letter like this before. Some end by apologizing, saying they've written to me because they have nowhere else to turn, asking me not to forget about them, not to forget about their families.

But there are a lot of people out there who are desperate. There's a lot of desperation out there. Today I want them and people like them across this country to know that I have not forgotten them. We have not forgotten them. They are why we're here today, to start delivering the change they demanded at the polls in November, that they have continued to demand since the election. And if we're successful, if we can pass comprehensive reform, these folks will see their costs come down, they'll get the care they need, and we'll help our businesses create jobs again so our economy can grow.

So it's not going to be easy. And there are going to be false starts and setbacks and mistakes along the way. But I'm confident, if we come together and work together, we will finally achieve what generations of Americans have fought for and fulfill the promise of health care in our time. And what a remarkable achievement that would be, something that Democrats and Republicans, business and labor, consumer groups and providers, all of us could share extraordinary pride in finally dealing with something that has been vexing us for so long.

So let's get to work. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:10 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to firefighter Travis Ulerick; and Melody C. Barnes, Director, Domestic Policy Council.

Remarks and a Discussion at the Closing Session of the White House Forum on Health Reform
March 5, 2009

The President. To Sir Edward Kennedy—that's the kind of greeting a knight deserves. [*Laughter*] It is thrilling to see you here, Teddy. We are so grateful for you taking the time to be here and the extraordinary work that your committee has already started to do, along with Mike Enzi, and I know Max Baucus and Chuck Grassley on the Senate side. Henry, I know that you guys are gearing to go on the House side.

So I just want to, first of all, thank all of you for participating. Today was the first discussion in this effort, but it was not the last. In the coming days and weeks, we'll be convening a series of meetings with senior administration officials here at the White House to further explore some of the key issues that were raised today and to bring more voices into the conversation.

But my understanding is, is that we had an extraordinarily productive set of sessions throughout the day. And I've gotten a readout from some of the breakout groups and breakout sessions. And I just want to summarize a few things that my staff thought were notable and that I thought were notable and are worth mentioning before I start taking some questions or some comments.

First of all, a clear consensus that the need for health care reform is here and now—Senators Hatch, Enzi, Congressman Jim Cooper, and many others agreed that we can do health care reform. Senator Hatch said that we needed leadership on both sides, and he believes that Democrats and Republicans need to put politics aside and work together to do it. Senator Whitehouse said this isn't a "Harry and Louise" moment; it's a "Thelma and Louise" moment. [*Laughter*] We're in the car headed towards the cliff, and we must act.

Now, I just want to be clear: If you actually saw the movie, they did drive over the cliff.

[*Laughter*] So I just want to be clear, that's not our intention here. [*Laughter*]

Insurers agree. Scott Serota, with the BlueCross BlueShield Association, said to consider past opposition the past; it is not the present. The time is right for action now. The American Medical Association said that they are here to be partners and to help. Tom Donahue, with the Chamber of Commerce, said that in the previous debate we knew where everyone stood; people are in different places now, including business; and that there is a vigorous understanding with all parties that improvements are needed. And Congressman Joe Barton complimented the process we've begun and said that he can agree with the principles that we've laid out. My staff thought that was a very notable statement, they complimenting the process. Melody, I think, slipped that one in. [*Laughter*]

With respect to the cost of care, Richard Kirsch, with the Health Care for America Now, said that we can't have a false dichotomy between coverage and costs; that by covering more people we can also lower costs at the same time, presumably because those who are not insured at the moment are ending up using extraordinarily expensive emergency room care.

Senator Whitehouse—you got two quotes in here. [*Laughter*] Senator Whitehouse pointed out that we pay more than a trillion dollars more than other countries for the same or lower qualities of care.

Ken Powell, CEO of General Mills and a member of the Business Roundtable, stressed the need to preserve the role of employers, and that many employers are investing in excellent prevention programs that are reducing costs and improving productivity. And I can testify to that. I've met a lot of extraordinary companies that have really taken the bull by the horns and are doing extraordinary work. Many participants stressed the need to invest in prevention, to lower costs and improve care, to tackle obesity, manage chronic care, invest in comparative effectiveness.

Congressman Dingell talked about the need to simplify the system to reduce costs and medical errors. Senator Baucus mentioned the need to make investments up front, such as health IT and comparative effectiveness to get big savings, and that we have to align incentives towards quality. And Congressman Waxman suggested the same point that's been made earlier that we can't control costs unless everyone is covered.

With respect to the public plan, Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky and the AFL–CIO talked about the need to create a public option in order to reduce costs to consumers and save money within the system. There were others who raised the—some concerns about the impact of a public plan limiting choices.

As for paying for reform, Congressman Rob Andrews challenged the group to identify additional ways to pay for reform and suggested that everyone needs to put something on the table to get reform done. And Senator Wyden raised the issue of modifying the tax exclusion for higher income Americans.

Last set of points that we thought were notable, Senators Grassley and Hatch and Congressman Dingell all discussed the need to address medical malpractice and reduce defensive medicine as a cost-saving measure.

So that's just some of the points that were made. I know that many of you had other insights. They have all been recorded, and we are going to be generating a document coming out of this that summarizes much that was heard in these various breakout sessions.

But what I want to do is just take some time now to give all of you a chance to hear from me directly, and I'm going to call on some Members. I'm going to call from some of the groups that were participating as well. I'm not going to be able to get to everybody.

And since he got such a weak reception when he walked in, I think that—[*laughter*]—it's only fitting that we give Ted Kennedy the first question. So we've got a microphone here, Ted, go ahead—or comment; it doesn't have to be a question.

Senator Edward M. Kennedy. Thank you very much, Mr. President. And I join in welcoming and seeing all of you once again at this very special gathering. I join with all of those that feel that this is the time—now is the time for action. I think most of us who have been in

this room before have seen other times when the House and the Senate have made efforts, but they haven't been the kind of serious effort that I think that we're seeing right now.

If you look over this gathering here today, you see the representatives of all the different groups that we have met with over the period of years. I mean, you have the insurance companies, you have the medical professions, all represented in one form or another. That has not been the case over the history of the past, going all the way back to Harry Truman's time.

But it is the case now. And it is, I think, a tribute to your leadership in bringing all these people together and really a leadership of so many that are gathered here today. Just in a very brief look around, you can see representatives of so many of the different interests. It'd be hard to think of those interests being together and being as concerned and providing the leadership that they are as they are demonstrating that kind of a commitment as we have today.

What it does is basically challenges all of us to really do the best we can. And I know that you and all of your staff—I congratulate Max Baucus and my colleagues who have done such an extraordinary effort to date. Just say that I'm looking forward to being a foot soldier in this undertaking, and this time, we will not fail. Thank you very much.

The President. Let me—I want to make sure that we are getting a good cross-section of views on this issue, so why don't I call on our Republican Leader, Mitch McConnell, if you've got any thoughts or comments on the issue.

Entitlement Spending

Senator Addison M. "Mitch" McConnell. First of all, Mr. President, thank you very much for having this session today. I think it's useful, and it is significant, as Ted indicated, to have everybody in the room.

I'm also among those, as you and I have discussed before, interested in seeing us address entitlement reform, and admittedly, Medicare and Medicaid would be a part of that, but also Social Security. And particularly concerned about having a mechanism in place that guarantees you get a result. And I wonder where you see yourself and the administration now, for example, in supporting something like the Conrad-Gregg proposal, which would set in place a mechanism that could actually guarantee that we get a result, if not on Medicare and Medicaid, at least on Social Security.

The President. Well, I appreciate the question, Mitch. As you know, we had a—I think they can hear me through—as you know, we had a fiscal responsibility summit similar to the gathering that we've had here, although I have to say the attendance here is even greater. And what I said in that forum was that I was absolutely committed to making sure that we got entitlement reform done.

The mechanism by which we do it, I think, is going to have to be determined by you, Harry Reid, Nancy Pelosi and John Boehner, and the Members of Congress. We've got to make certain that the various committees are comfortable with how we move forward.

But the important point that I want to emphasize today is that on Medicare and Medicaid, in particular—which everybody here understands is the 800-pound gorilla—I don't see us being able to get an effective reform package around those entitlements without fixing the underlying problem of health care inflation. If we've got 6, 7, 8 percent health care inflation, we could fix Medicare and Medicaid temporarily for a couple of years, but we would be back in the same fix 10 years from now. And so our most urgent task is to drive down costs both on the private side and on the public side, because Medicare and Medicaid costs have actually gone up fairly comparably to what's been happening in the private sector, what businesses and families and others have been doing. That's why I think it's so important for us to focus on costs as part of this overall reform package.

With respect to Social Security, I actually think it's easier than Medicare and Medicaid, and as a consequence, I'm going to be interested in working with you. And I know that others like Senator Durbin, Lindsey Graham have already begun discussions about what the best mechanisms would be. I remain committed to that task.

But if we don't tackle health care, then we're going to break the bank. I think that's true at the Federal level; I think it's true at the State

level. It's certainly true for businesses, and it's certainly true for families. Okay.

Henry, do you want to just give a little feedback in terms of what you heard and any points you'd like to make?

Representative Henry A. Waxman. Thank you very much, Mr. President. Let me just say that Senator Kennedy will not be a foot soldier in this battle. He has been the inspiration to all of us, all Americans who held out the dream that every American ought to have affordable, quality health care. And I want to salute him for that.

Mr. President, by bringing people together—the different stakeholders, the people representing different interest groups, the Democrats and the Republicans, all of us together—I think you've given us an opportunity not to insist that we get all that we want, but to realize that we're part of a process; and that we if don't get everything we want, the answer—alternative is not to do nothing, as you pointed out earlier, but to make sure that we've got the best system we can develop. And that has to be a system that includes all Americans in health insurance that they'll be able to hold onto if they think they're satisfied with it or to be able to access if they don't have it at the present time.

So I think this is a very useful meeting. Our breakout session was very on point. And I think it leads all of us to recognize that we have to work together. We all need to recognize there are going to be tradeoffs, but if we don't get the tradeoff exactly the way we want it, we've got to recognize there's a broader public goal and purpose. And your leadership, I think, is going to make this bill possible to get into law.

The President. Good. Thank you. Thank you, Henry.

Is Jo Ann Emerson here? Where—there you are. Good to see you, Jo Ann.

Health Care Reform

Representative Jo Ann Emerson. Thank you very much for having me here today, and thank you very much for your passion on this issue. Coming from a very rural, poor district in southeast and south central Missouri, I have so many constituents who have no insurance, nor do they have—nor do those who have insurance necessarily have access——

The President. ——to providers——

Rep. Emerson. ——to providers, particularly primary providers. And so for us to be able to get together, all stakeholders—Members of the House, Senate, Republicans, Democrats, business, labor, you name it—I think that that's critical. And I hope that all of us from both parties will be willing to kind of take a fresh look and say, you know, if there are laws that we had on the books before, that they need to be opened up if we need to change the system. And I think all of us have to be willing to kind of give a little, if you will.

And I thank you so very much because for me this has been a passion for all 13 years I've been in Congress. Thank you.

The President. Good. Well, listen, I appreciate your point, Jo Ann, and I want to amplify it. I think it is so important that all of us make decisions throughout this process based on evidence and data and what works, as opposed to what our dug-in positions may have been in the past. Because if we can at least agree on a set of facts, we're still going to have tough choices, but we're more likely to make good decisions on behalf of families.

And so I want to be clear about my own position in this process. When during the campaign I put forward a plan for health care reform, I thought it was a excellent plan, but I don't presume that it was a perfect plan or that it was the best possible plan. It's conceivable that there were other ideas out there that we had not thought of.

If there is a way of getting this done where we're driving down costs and people are getting health insurance at an affordable rate and have choice of doctor, have flexibility in terms of their plans, and we could do that entirely through the market, I'd be happy to do it that way. If there was a way of doing it that involved more government regulation and involvement, I'm happy to do it that way as well.

I just want to figure out what works, and that requires us to actually look at the evidence and try to figure out, based on the experience that now has been accumulated for a lot

of years, you know, how can we improve the system. And I'm absolutely confident that there's going to be low-hanging fruit. For example, the issue of health IT; I don't think there's any dispute between Newt Gingrich and Ted Kennedy that if we digitalize our health care system, we're going save money over the long term, and we're going to reduce error and save lives.

There are going to be some other areas that's not such low-hanging fruit, and there's greater dispute about what might work, but we have to keep that open mind that you called for, Jo Ann. That's going to be critical.

Let me go to Max Baucus and then Chuck Grassley. I want to get a sense of the folks on the finance committee; they're going to have some influence on this process. [*Laughter*] Just a little bit. [*Laughter*] Max.

Senator Max S. Baucus. Thank you, Mr. President. First, we've got some real luminaries in this room—yourself. A few hours ago, you mentioned that President Roosevelt tried to accomplish health care reform. He's over there right there in the corner. [*Laughter*]

The President. There's Teddy—the other Teddy. [*Laughter*]

Sen. Baucus. That's right. And the third luminary is sitting right to my right, right here. And I think in the spirit of all three of you, this is a terrific opportunity.

Second, the American public wants it. That's a no-brainer. We're at a time in American history when the American people want health care reform, for all the reasons that you mentioned. And it is, as you mentioned, a moral and physical imperative. There's no doubt about that. And you've started this process I think in very much the right way, namely, getting us all together, a tone and a culture and a feeling of cooperation and a constructive ways, evidence-based—what's the science, what works/doesn't work, practically and pragmatically.

And the real key here is for us to continue that frame of mind, to continue that attitude, to keep everybody at the table. This is all-encompassing. There are tradeoffs everywhere. This is not a short-term, tactical exercise. This is a strategic, longer term plan here that has to be a uniquely American solution. We're not Europe. We're not Canada. We're not Japan. We're not other countries. We're America, with public and private participation. And there's no doubt in my mind, just tapping into the good old American can-do and entrepreneurial spirit, that we are going to find a solution. And the key here really is to keep—for us to all stay at the table, keep an open mind, after we've seen how this works with that and so forth.

This is really not going to be easy; it has a fairly steep learning curve for an awful lot of people to get this done. But clearly the attitude is here, that is, the frame of mind is here, the desire is here to do this in a very cooperative way. And I can't thank you enough for your providing leadership to help make all that happen.

The President. Thank you. Thank you, Chuck. Thank you, Max. Chuck.

Private Insurance Plans

Senator Charles E. Grassley. Mr. President, thank you very much for this opportunity.

From our breakout session you'd probably get the idea that it's pretty easy to get done. We know it's very difficult to get done. But without that sort of feeling starting out, nothing would get done. And I think you served with us in the Senate long enough to know that Max Baucus and I have a pretty good record of working out bipartisan things. Neither one of us or neither one of our parties get everything that they want, but we've had a pretty good record. I think only two bills in 8 years that haven't been bipartisan.

And so we have a process in place that has hearings coming up; it has a process of getting roundtable discussions, getting stakeholders in, getting authorities in. And we expect to have—work on this in the committee in June. It maybe will sound a little ambitious, but if you aren't ambitious on a major problem like this that the country decides needs to be done, it will never get done.

So the only thing that I would throw out for your consideration—and please don't respond to this now, because I'm asking you just to think about it—there's a lot of us that feel that the public option, that the Government is an unfair competitor, and that we're going to get an awful lot of crowd out, and we have to keep what we have now strong and make it stronger.

The President. Okay. Well, let me just—I'm not going to respond definitively. The thinking on the public option has been that it gives consumers more choices and it helps give—keep the private sector honest, because there's some competition out there. That's been the thinking.

I recognize, though, the fear that if a public option is run through Washington, and there are incentives to try to tamp down costs and—or at least what shows up on the books—and you've got the ability in Washington, apparently, to print money, that private insurance plans might end up feeling overwhelmed. So I recognize that there's that concern. I think it's a serious one and a real one. And we'll make sure that it gets addressed, partly because I assume it will be very hard to come out of committee unless we're thinking about it a little bit. And so we want to make sure that that's something that we pay attention to.

A couple of other people I want to call on. I'm going to switch gears and get some groups in here, and then I'll come back to a couple of other legislators.

Karen Ignagni—there you are, good. Why don't you wait for a mike, Karen, so that we can hear you? Karen represents America's Health Insurance Plans.

Karen Ignagni. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you for inviting us to participate in this forum. I think on behalf of our entire membership, they would want to be able to say to you this afternoon, and everyone here, that we understand we have to earn a seat at the table.

We've already offered a comprehensive series of proposals. We want to work with you; we want to work with the Members of Congress on a bipartisan basis here. You have our commitment. We hear the American people about what's not working. We've taken that very seriously. You have our commitment to play, to contribute, and to help pass health care reform this year.

The President. Good, thank you. Karen, that's good news. That's America's Health Insurance Plans.

And while I'm on it, why don't I call on Dan Danner, who's NFIB. Is Dan still here? There he is. Dan.

Cost of Health Care Reform

Donald A. "Dan" Danner. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Give us the business perspective.

Mr. Danner. Well, I'm honored to be here representing small business. We do think that small business has a key role in this debate, and for them, cost is still the top issue. And we very much look forward to finding a solution together that works for America's job creators. So, appreciate being here, and thank you.

The President. Good. One thing I want to talk about just—this whole cost issue. I can't emphasize this enough: There is a moral imperative to health care. I get 40,000 letters, I guess, every day here in the White House. I don't read all 40,000—[*laughter*]—but my staff selects 10 every single day that I read and try to respond to, as many of them as possible. It's a way of staying in touch with the constituencies that I had a chance to meet during the course of the campaign.

I can tell you that on average, out of the 10 at least 3 every single day relate to somebody who's having a health care crisis. Either it's a small business that's frustrated because they can't even insure themselves, much less their employees; it's a mom who's trying to figure out how to insure their child because they make a little bit too much money so they don't qualify for SCHIP in their State—heartbreaking stories. So there is a moral component to this that we can't leave behind.

Having said that, if we don't address costs, I don't care how heartfelt our efforts are, we will not get this done. If people think that we can simply take everybody who's not insured and load them up in a system where costs are out of control, it's not going to happen. We will run out of money. The Federal Government will be bankrupt; State governments will be bankrupt.

So I hope everybody understands that. For those of you who are passionate about universal coverage and making sure that the moral

dimension of health care is dealt with, don't think that we can get that done without—[*coughing*]. Excuse me. This is a health care forum, so I thought I'd, you know—[*laughter*]—model what happens when you don't get enough sleep. [*Laughter*]

Don't think that we can—that's right, I'm talking to you liberal bleeding hearts out there. [*Laughter*] Don't think that we can solve this problem without tackling costs. And that may make some in the progressive community uncomfortable, but it's got to be dealt with. And the flip side is what I would say to those who are obsessed with costs—and this goes to the issue of Medicare and Medicaid reform as well—I don't think it is a viable option as a means of controlling costs simply to throw seniors off the Medicare rolls, for example, or to prevent them from getting vital care that they need, which means, you know, we've got to balance heart and head as we move this process forward.

A couple other people I want to call on. How about Charlie Rangel? He has a tax committee that's important. [*Laughter*]

Representative Charles B. Rangel. People have said that when I first came to Washington, George Washington had black hair. [*Laughter*] But I have to tell you, Mr. President, this is one of the most exciting experience and opportunities. There hasn't been a year that we haven't talked about this. And you have brought all of these different stakeholders to read from the same page, to show how important it is to our country. And I'm excited about it. Our speakers made it abundantly clear that there may be a lot of people to blame but it won't be your committee people; it won't be those of us who have jurisdictions. There's nothing that we would rather do than be able to say that we helped for you to fulfill not just a campaign obligation, but a moral obligation. We all are indebted.

And so, Senator Kennedy, this is a fantastic day. There hasn't been a time we haven't hoped that we could do this. And so, we know that there's going to be a lot of problems. But we also know what you've created is a group of missionaries to make our political job easier so that when we have the problems they won't have to say, "What are they doing in Congress?" They can go to our union leaders, our businesspeople, our advocate for children's, those that do want public programs. And at least we would know that we're moving in the direction, which our country wants us to do collectively. So I'm proud to be on the team.

The President. Good, thank you. Is your counterpart on your committee here?

Rep. Rangel. Yes, he is. Dave and I——

The President. Come on, Dave.

Rep. Rangel. ——have worked so closely together. If we can keep the disagreements down, we'll be a hell of a team.

The President. Well, what I meant, Charlie, was let's give him the mike. [*Laughter*]

Representative David L. Camp. It's tough in the minority, let me tell you. [*Laughter*]

The President. Go ahead, David.

Rep. Camp. You do lose the microphone when you're not in the majority.

But thank you, Mr. President. Thank you so much for bringing us all together. I think much of what has been said I can agree with, and I think particularly the idea that we have an American solution. And certainly in America the idea that a patient and a physician make the health care decisions that affect them is certainly something we need to protect.

The President. Right.

Rep. Camp. And I just appreciate the opportunity to be here. I look forward to working with you. There's so many things that we talked about that we had in common in terms of health information technology, wellness. But we are going to have to figure out just how much of our economy is devoted to health care, and that's going to be a big issue we have to face.

The President. Right.

Rep. Camp. ——and this cost-shifting that goes on between public and private health care dimensions. And those are challenging things, but I look forward to working with you and your team on this.

Doctors

The President. Good. Well, you raise a couple of important points. Number one, doctors—and I'm assuming that we've got somebody—and I'm going to call on them in a second—but I've got a lot of very close friends who are doctors. And the enormous pressure and strain that the

medical profession is now feeling from a whole variety of sources is something that we've got to attend to in this reform process. We're not producing enough primary care physicians, because the costs of medical education are so high that people feel they've got to specialize.

The issue of malpractice insurance is real, and if you're an ob-gyne, that is enormous pressure that you've having to deal with.

One of the things that we've done in this budget that we're presenting is to finally surface what had been the fiction that we weren't going to give doctors higher reimbursements—we always did it in the end, we just didn't budget for it—and caused enormous stress for them.

Now, the flip of it is if we're going to do more for doctors, part of what we've also got to say is, if there are States like Minnesota that are providing as good or better care than other States and yet are keeping their costs lower, and Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements are better controlled, shouldn't we be learning from what those States are doing and then making that more generally applicable?

And there may be some resistance on the part of providers to say, "Well, you know, our circumstances are different in this State or that State." But this is what I mean when I say that data and evidence have to drive the process. If we can find better practices, then doctors have to be willing to learn from the experience of others in terms of controlling costs. They've got to be part of the solution as well.

So since I'm talking about doctors, we've got Ted Epperly of the American Academy of Family Physicians. Is Ted around here somewhere? Here we go. Go ahead. You've got a mike right behind you.

Ted Epperly. Well, first, Mr. President, what an honor to be here and to be with all of you. Speaking on behalf of over 100,000 family doctors, we're ready to do our part. We very much believe that we need to expand coverage in this country to everyone, and we need to fix the workforce, sir, so that all those patients have a place to go. We'll roll up our shirt sleeves and do everything possible to make this work, because it is the right thing to do. And I applaud you and this body for doing this today, to do it this year, and we must do it. Thank you.

The President. Good. Okay, before we break up, because we've been using some time, and I'm starting to get Reggie Love signaling over there—whenever he stands, since he's 6'5", I see him—[*laughter*]—and I know that we're running out of time. Are there some people that I did not call on that have a critical question or point that they would like to make?

Yes, go ahead, please.

Nurses

Representative Lois Capps. Mr. President, thank you very much. I'm Lois Capps, and I will love to follow the doctor. I also want to say to Senator Kennedy: This is the time. As one of three nurses in the U.S. Congress, the proposals you are putting forward resonate. Nurses do provide quality care. They help reduce costs through increased preventive care, and they deliver cost-effective primary care, along with physicians, especially in underserved areas.

But we have a huge shortage of nurses today. And estimates are that the U.S. will be lacking over 500,000 nurses in the next 7 years. Our nursing schools are only able to admit a tiny fraction of applicants. The greatest bottleneck for educating more nurses comes from the lack of nursing school faculty.

You've done a great job by proposing an increase in nursing education in your 2010 budget and by including nurse education funding in the Recovery Act. I'd love to hear your thoughts. If not—if there's no time today, I'd love to pursue this—there are other nurses in the room—on how we can further advance nursing education and faculty training, because they are going to be essential to our overall efforts to contain costs while expanding and improving care. Thank you very much.

The President. Well, let me respond to this right away, because it's not that complicated. Nurses provide extraordinary care. I mean, they are the frontlines of the health care system, and they don't get paid very well. Their working conditions aren't as good as they should be. And when it comes to nurse faculty,

they get paid even worse than active nurses. So what happens is, is that it is very difficult for a nurse practitioner to go into teaching, because they're losing money.

The notion that we would have to import nurses makes absolutely no sense. And for people who get fired up about the immigration debate, and yet don't notice that we could be training nurses right here in the United States—and there are a lot of people who would love to be in that helping profession, and yet we just aren't providing the resources to get them trained—that's something that we've got to fix. That should be a no-brainer. That should be a bipartisan no-brainer to make sure that we've got the best possible nursing staffs in the country.

Right next to you.

Cost of Health Care Reform

Representative Frank Pallone, Jr. Thank you, Mr. President. I know you stressed the cost efficiencies, and that is certainly important, and it was an important part of our breakout session. But I also want to commend you for also being honest in saying that there has to be a new source of funding as well, because in your reserve fund you mentioned a new source of funding dealing with deductions, whatever, for people over a certain income. And I do notice that there is a tendency to think that we can somehow expand health insurance and achieve coverage for everyone just with the existing money in the system, and I don't think that's true.

So I want to commend you for that. And I want everyone to keep in mind the fact that we have to come up with a new source of funding, and if either what you proposed or perhaps others, because, even as you said in your budget message that this only pays—this reserve fund—for about half the cost if we're going to cover everyone. And that's an important part of this as well.

The President. Well, let me—I want to make a important distinction, though, between short-term costs and long-term costs. I don't think that we can expand coverage on the front end without some money. By definition, we will not have changed the system sufficiently to drive down costs in order to pay for new people being part of the system.

Now, keep in mind, we're already paying for those folks. Every single person at home, the average family is paying $900 per family in additional premiums because of the care that people are receiving in emergency rooms. So we're paying for it, but it's oftentimes hidden.

But capturing those savings will take some time. Health IT is going to save money, but it's not going to save money in year 1 or year 2; it'll save money in year 10, 11, 15, and 20. If we're doing a good job on prevention and are reducing rates of obesity—if we went back to the obesity rates that existed back in 1980, we'd save the system a trillion dollars, but we're not going to do that overnight; it's going to take some time.

So what we constantly have to think about is short-term costs versus even higher long-term costs. And what I'm trying to do in this debate is make sure that we're focused not just on year 1 and year 2, but on year 10, year 20, year 30, and year 50, and making sure that our children are not bankrupted. Now, that creates a very difficult political task. Nothing is harder in politics than doing something now that costs money in order to gain benefits 20 years from now. It's the single hardest thing to do in politics, and that's part of the reason why health care reform has consistently broken down.

There should be enough money in the system. We spend more per capita than any nation on Earth. And to find that American solution that mixes public and private, but also says we shouldn't have such an inefficient system and we should make investments today to ensure that we're saving money down the road, that's going to be our challenge.

Okay, I've got time for maybe a couple more questions. The gentleman right here, and I'll catch folks back here as well.

Lawrence A. McAndrews. Mr. President, my name is Lawrence McAndrews. I represent the National Association of Children's Hospitals. First, I'd like to thank you for your leadership with CHIP; extending coverage to 4 million children is just fantastic.

The President. Thank you.

Mr. McAndrews. Second, as your leadership in CHIP has illustrated, perhaps children can lead the way. And I think we in the pediatric community—children represent 25 percent of the population, 10 percent of the health care costs—and we, I think, are a small enough community, cohesive enough—the doctors and the hospitals working together, we know each other—that perhaps we can offer an opportunity to be another leading edge in your plan for change. And we would work with you in the implementation of any quality measures, any new incentive structures.

And I think children's hospitals tend to be a disrupter in the cost of care, because they take care of 40 to 50 percent of the market and we can—and the most expensive kids. Working with you, we can make the biggest downpayment, the Willie Sutton principle, so to speak. Where the money is, we can help you manage that.

The President. Good.

Mr. McAndrews. Thank you very much.

The President. That's a great point, that's a great point. I'm going to make this—I'm—oh, suddenly everybody raises their hands. [*Laughter*] I'm going to take two more questions—this young lady right here and then this gentleman right here, just because they had their hands up a little bit earlier.

Go ahead.

Health Care for Minorities

Audience member. Thank you so very much, Mr. President. And it's quite an honor for you having all of us here today. You've created a network among us that we didn't even know exists. We are more alike than we are different. And I would ask that all of us help to make sure that the elimination of racial and ethnic health disparities be a core component of whatever health care reform legislation may look like that you enact.

And I thank you again.

The President. Well, I think that's important, I think that's important. And that's an example of where there is some data out there that's pretty indisputable that even when you account for incomes and levels of insurance, that you're still seeing problems in the African American community and the Latino community, Native American communities, in terms of quality of care and outcomes.

And part of what we should be doing is to think about, based on this evidence and this data, are there ways that we can close those gaps. And to the extent that that is reflected in this reform, I think that will ultimately save everybody money. Okay?

Audience member. Thank you so much. Just one really quick one—if you will give us the marching orders before we leave. [*Laughter*]

Irwin Redlener. Mr. President, I'm Irwin Redlener, a pediatrician at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health and president of the Children's Health Fund. And I also just want to underscore how extraordinarily important this meeting was. It launches health care in a way that I don't think we've ever seen before in this country. And we all, I know, congratulate you deeply about that.

And I wanted to say just a couple of words about prevention, which has been mentioned a few times. Prevention needs to be bolstered by a strong American public health system as well. And we cannot forget about the public health infrastructure as we're building and strengthening our health care system in general. So the public health schools are often the places where the research is done that tell us and guide us what kinds of preventive interventions actually work. And what works is really going to be important.

I also wanted to underscore what Larry McAndrews said about the importance of investing in children. They are not only a compelling moral issue for us, but they are compelling fiscally as well. America is going to be depending on its children to be fully functional, to function in school, to succeed in ways that can only happen if their health is protected and guarded.

And the final point is that I don't think we've mentioned yet the role of individual citizens. Every single American has a role to play in making us healthier as a nation. And your inspiration and, hopefully, the inspiration of others here will make sure that individuals know that their choices of healthy lifestyle decisions and making sure they get the

prevention that they need will bolster our ability to provide quality health care and reduce the cost of care that could have been avoided if we had thought about prevention in the first place. Thank you.

The President. Those are all great points.

Let me just close by saying this, because somebody asked for marching orders. Number one, all of the groups here need to stay involved. And I know you will. Number two, we will generate a report or a summary of the comments in the various breakout sessions that will be distributed to all the participants. Number three, I know that Nancy Pelosi, Harry Reid, Mitch McConnell, John Boehner, and the other leadership are interested in moving a process forward, and so unlike the fiscal responsibility summit where I think we have to have some discussion about mechanisms and how do we make it work so that it takes, I think here you've got a bunch of committees that are eager and ready and willing to get to work.

And so I just want to make sure that I don't get in the way of all of you moving aggressively and rapidly. I've got some very strong ideas, and the White House will be providing some guideposts and guidelines about what we think we can afford to do, how we think it's best to do it, but we don't have a monopoly on good ideas. And to the extent that this work is being done effectively in these various committees, then I assure you that we are going to do everything that we can to work with all of you, Democrat and Republican.

But the one thing that I've got to say here: There's been some talk about the notion that maybe we're taking on too much, right? That we're in the midst of an economic crisis and that the system is overloaded, and so we should put this off for another day. Well, let's just be clear. When times were good, we didn't get it done. When we had mild recessions, we didn't get it done. When we were in peacetime, we did not get it done. When we were at war, we did not get it done.

There is always a reason not to do it. And it strikes me that now is exactly the time for us to deal with this problem. The American people are looking for solutions. Business is looking for solutions. And government—State, Federal, and local—needs solutions to this problem.

So for all of you who've been elected to office or those of you who are heading up major associations, I would just say, what better time than now, and what better cause for us to take up? Imagine the pride when we go back to our constituencies next year and say, you know what, we finally got something done on health care. That's something that's worth fighting for, and I hope all of you fight for it. Okay.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:08 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Scott P. Serota, president and chief executive officer, BlueCross BlueShield Association; Thomas J. Donahue, president and chief executive officer, U.S. Chamber of Commerce; Melody C. Barnes, Director, Domestic Policy Council; Richard Kirsch, national campaign manager, Health Care for America Now; former Rep. Newton L. Gingrich; Karen Ignagni, president and chief executive officer, America's Health Insurance Plans; Donald A. "Dan" Danner, president and chief executive officer, National Federation of Independent Business; Ted Epperly, president, American Academy of Family Physicians; Personal Aide to the President Reginald L. Love; and Lawrence A. McAndrews, president and chief executive officer, National Association of Children's Hospitals.

Remarks at a Columbus Police Academy Graduation Ceremony in Columbus, Ohio

March 6, 2009

Thank you very much. Please, everybody have a seat. Thank you so much. Well, what a wonderful reception. Thank you very much. I want to begin by thanking Mayor Coleman, Director Brown, and the entire Columbus police force for inviting me to be a part of this

ceremony. It is a great honor and a privilege to stand with the men and women of this police academy's 114th graduating class. You have studied hard, you have trained tirelessly, and there is no longer any doubt that you will be employed as officers of the law when you leave here today.

I also want to just very quickly acknowledge one of the finest Governors in the country, who's been just dealing with all kinds of stuff and doing it with grace and aplomb and never breaks a sweat, but is working hard on behalf of his constituency, Ted Strickland; the Attorney General of the United States, Eric Holder.

I came out here with the—a number of members of the Ohio congressional delegation, but I want to make a special note of my former colleague when I was in the Senate, who is just as passionate about working people as anybody in the country, Sherrod Brown. Give Sherrod a big round of applause.

This city of Columbus needs the courage and the commitment of this graduating class to keep it safe, to make sure that people have the protection that they need. This economy needs your employment to keep it running. Just this morning we learned that we lost another 651,000 jobs throughout the country in the month of February alone, which brings the total number of jobs lost in this recession to an astounding 4.4 million.

Four point four million jobs, I don't need to tell the people of this State what statistics like this mean, because so many of you have been watching jobs disappear long before this recession hit. And I don't need to tell this graduating class what it's like to know that your job might be next, because up until a few weeks ago, that is precisely the future that this class faced, a future that millions of Americans still face right now. Well, that is not a future I accept for the United States of America. That is why I signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act into law.

Now there were those who argued that our recovery plan was unwise and unnecessary. They opposed the very notion that government has a role in ending the cycle of job loss at the heart of this recession. There are those who believe that all we can do is repeat the very same policies that led us here in the first place.

But I also know that this country has never responded to a crisis by sitting on the sidelines and hoping for the best. I know that throughout our history, we have met every great challenge with bold action and big ideas. That's what's fueled a shared and lasting prosperity. And I know that at this defining moment for America we have a responsibility to ourselves and to our children to do it once again. We have a responsibility to act, and that's what I intend to do as President of the United States of America.

So for those who still doubt the wisdom of our recovery plan, I ask them to talk to the teachers who are still able to teach our children because we passed this plan. I ask them to talk to the nurses who are still able to care for our sick and the firefighters and first-responders who will still be able to keep our communities safe. I ask them to come to Ohio and meet the 25 men and women who will soon be protecting the streets of Columbus because we passed this plan. I look at these young men and women, I look into their eyes and I see their badges today and I know we did the right thing.

These jobs and the jobs of so many other police officers and teachers and firefighters all across Ohio will now be saved because of this recovery plan, a plan that will also create jobs in every corner of this State. Last week, we announced that Ohio would receive $128 million that will put people to work renovating and rebuilding affordable housing. On Tuesday I announced that we'd be sending another $935 million to Ohio that will create jobs rebuilding our roads, our bridges, and our highways. And yesterday Vice President Biden announced $180 million for this State that will go towards expanding mass transit and buying fuel-efficient buses, money that will be putting people to work, getting people to work.

Altogether, this recovery plan will save and create over 3½ million American jobs over the next 2 years. Because of this plan, those who have lost their jobs in this recession will be able to receive extended unemployment benefits and continued health care coverage. Be-

cause of this plan, 95 percent of working Americans will receive a tax break that you will see in your paychecks starting on April 1st. And because of this plan, stories like the one we're celebrating here in Columbus will soon take place all across this Nation.

Today I'm pleased to announce that Attorney General Eric Holder and the Department of Justice are making available $2 billion in Justice Assistance Grants from the recovery act. That's funding that will help communities throughout America keep their neighborhoods safer with more cops, more prosecutors, more probation officers, more radios and equipment, more help for crime victims, and more crime prevention programs for youth. Cities and States can apply for these funds right away, and as soon as those applications are received, the Justice Department will start getting the money out the door within 15 days.

In Savannah, Georgia, the police department would use this funding to hire more crime and intelligence analysts and put more cops on the beat protecting our schools. In Long Beach, California, it will be able to help fund 17,000 hours of overtime for law enforcement officials who are needed in high-crime areas. West Haven, Connecticut, will be able to restore crime prevention programs that were cut, even though they improved the quality of life in the city's most troubled neighborhoods. And the State of Iowa will be able to rehire drug enforcement officers and restart drug prevention programs that have been critical in fighting the crime and violence that plagues too many cities and too many towns.

So the list goes on and on. From Maine to San Francisco, from Colorado to New Jersey, these grants will put Americans to work doing the work necessary to keep America safe. They'll be directed only towards worthy programs that have been carefully planned and proven to work, and Vice President Biden and I will be holding every State and community accountable for the tax dollars they spend.

Now, by itself, this recovery plan won't turn our economy around or solve every problem. In the flight over here with the Ohio delegation, I talked to them about the fact that we've got big challenges ahead of us. We inherited a big mess. This police force still faces budget challenges down the road, there are still workers in Columbus who are losing their jobs, and there is still so much work to be done throughout Ohio to lay a new foundation for growth and prosperity.

That's the work we must continue in the days and months ahead. That's why my administration is also moving quickly and aggressively to restart lending for families and businesses, to help responsible homeowners pay their mortgages and refinance their homes, to address the major economic challenges of our time: the cost of health care, our dependence on foreign oil, the state of our schools.

All of this takes time and it will take patience. It will entail great effort and cooperation. But most of all, it will require a renewed sense of responsibility from every American, a responsibility to ourselves and one another, a responsibility that's already been demonstrated by the men and women who are sitting behind me here today.

The job you signed up for is not easy. It can mean long shifts and late nights. It demands focus and determination and great bravery in the face of unknown dangers. When you run into that building or chase down that suspect, you will be risking your own life in order to protect the lives of men and women you have never met and some that you may never know.

But you knew all that when you joined the academy. You knew the risks involved, you knew the sacrifices required, and yet you stood up and said, "I'll take that risk. I'll make that sacrifice. I will do that job."

And that, Columbus, is the very essence of responsibility. That's the spirit we need in this country right now, no matter what our role is or what our profession that we've chosen. It's a spirit that asks us to look beyond our own individual ambitions to the wider obligations we have as the good citizens of a great nation, a spirit that calls on us to say, "I'll make that sacrifice. I'll do that job."

If we can summon that spirit once more, if we're willing to look out for one another and listen to one another, if we are willing to pull together and do our part, if we can show even a fraction of the courage and selflessness that

these cadets have already demonstrated, then I have no doubt that we will emerge from this crisis stronger than before and keep this Nation's dream alive for future generations.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:53 a.m. at the Aladdin Shrine Center. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Michael B. Coleman of Columbus, OH, who introduced the President; and Mitchell J. Brown, director, Department of Public Safety, Columbus, OH.

The President's Weekly Address
March 7, 2009

Yesterday we learned that the economy lost another 651,000 jobs in the month of February, which brings the total number of jobs lost in this recession to 4.4 million. The unemployment rate has now surpassed 8 percent, the highest rate in a quarter century. These aren't just statistics, but hardships experienced personally by millions of Americans who no longer know how they'll pay their bills or make their mortgage or raise their families.

From the day I took office, I knew that solving this crisis would not be easy, nor would it happen overnight. And we will continue to face difficult days in the months ahead. But I also believe that we will get through this; that if we act swiftly and boldly and responsibly, the United States of America will emerge stronger and more prosperous than it was before.

That's why my administration is committed to doing all that's necessary to address this crisis and lead us to a better day. That's why we're moving forward with an economic agenda that will jump-start job creation, restart lending, relieve responsible homeowners, and address the long-term economic challenges of our time: the cost of health care, our dependence on oil, and the state of our schools.

To prevent foreclosures for as many as 4 million homeowners and lower interest rates and lift home values for millions more, we are implementing a plan to allow lenders to work with borrowers to refinance or restructure their mortgages. On Wednesday, the Department of Treasury and Housing and Urban Development released the guidelines that lenders will use for lowering mortgage payments. This plan is now at work.

To restore the availability of affordable loans for families and businesses—not just banks—we are taking steps to restart the flow of credit and stabilize the financial markets. On Thursday, the Treasury Department and the Federal Reserve launched the Consumer and Business Lending Initiative, a plan that will generate up to a trillion dollars of new lending so that families can finance a car or college education and small businesses can raise the capital that will create jobs.

And we've already begun to implement the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, a plan that will save and create over 3.5 million jobs over the next 2 years, jobs rebuilding our roads and bridges, constructing wind turbines and solar panels, expanding broadband and mass transit. And because of this plan, those who have lost their job in this recession will be able to receive extended unemployment benefits and continued health care coverage, while 95 percent of working Americans will receive a tax break beginning April 1st.

Of course, like every family going through hard times, our country must make tough choices. In order to pay for the things we need, we cannot waste money on the things we don't. My administration inherited a $1.3 trillion budget deficit, the largest in history. And we've inherited a budgeting process as irresponsible as it is unsustainable. For years, as Wall Street used accounting tricks to conceal costs and avoid responsibility, Washington did too.

These kinds of irresponsible budgets and inexcusable practices are now in the past. For the first time in many years, my administration has produced a budget that represents an honest reckoning of where we are and where we need to go.

It's also a budget that begins to make the hard choices that we've avoided for far too

long, a strategy that cuts where we must and invests where we need. That's why it includes $2 trillion in deficit reduction, while making historic investments in America's future. That's why it reduces discretionary spending for nondefense programs as a share of the economy by more than 10 percent over the next decade to the lowest level since they began keeping these records nearly half a century ago. And that's why on Wednesday, I signed a Presidential memorandum to end unnecessary no-bid contracts and dramatically reform the way contracts are awarded, reforms that will save the American people up to $40 billion each year.

Finally, because we cannot bring our deficit down or grow our economy without tackling the skyrocketing cost of health care, I held a health care summit on Thursday to begin the long-overdue process of reform. Our ideas and opinions about how to achieve this reform will vary, but our goal must be the same: quality, affordable health care for every American that no longer overwhelms the budgets of families, businesses, and our government.

Yes, this is a moment of challenge for our country, but we've experienced great trials before. And with every test, each generation has found the capacity to not only endure but to prosper, to discover great opportunity in the midst of great crisis. That is what we can and must do today. And I am absolutely confident that is what we will do. I am confident that at this defining moment, we will prove ourselves worthy of the sacrifice of those who came before us and the promise of those who will come after.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:40 p.m. on March 6 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on March 7. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 6 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 7.

Statement on International Women's Day
March 8, 2009

In observance of International Women's Day, and during Women's History Month in the United States, the United States stands with people around the globe to reaffirm our commitment to the equality, freedom, achievements, and advancement of women.

From the global challenge of climate change to a world that is not yet free from poverty and conflict, our challenges are many. Women are vital to the solutions to these problems, and we will not sow the seeds for a brighter future or reap the benefits of the change we need without the full and active participation of women around the world.

Worldwide, women play leadership roles in the health and education of our families, in our fields, our factories, our classrooms, our laboratories, and our boardrooms. With or without awards or acknowledgement, women have taught us about hope, about courage, and about opportunity.

The United States is filled with great hope that our daughters, and the daughters of all nations, will continue to serve as leaders in the pursuit of our collective well-being and have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. Today Michelle and I remember, celebrate, and honor the sacrifices, talents, and leadership of women around the world.

Remarks on Signing an Executive Order Removing Barriers to Responsible Scientific Research Involving Human Stem Cells and a Memorandum on Scientific Integrity
March 9, 2009

Thank you. All right, please have a seat. [*Applause*] Thank you so much. Well, I'm excited too. [*Laughter*] Today, with the Executive order I am about to sign, we will bring the change

that so many scientists and researchers, doctors and innovators, patients and loved ones have hoped for and fought for these past 8 years. We will lift the ban on Federal funding for promising embryonic stem cell research. We will also vigorously support scientists who pursue this research, and we will aim for America to lead the world in the discoveries it one day may yield.

At this moment, the full promise of stem cell research remains unknown, and it should not be overstated. But scientists believe these tiny cells may have the potential to help us understand and possibly cure some of our most devastating diseases and conditions: to regenerate a severed spinal cord and lift someone from a wheelchair, to spur insulin production and spare a child from a lifetime of needles, to treat Parkinson's, cancer, heart disease, and others that affect millions of Americans and the people who love them.

But that potential will not reveal itself on its own. Medical miracles do not happen simply by accident. They result from painstaking and costly research, from years of lonely trial and error, much of which never bears fruit, and from a Government willing to support that work. From lifesaving vaccines to pioneering cancer treatments to the sequencing of the human genome, that is the story of scientific progress in America. When Government fails to make these investments, opportunities are missed, promising avenues go unexplored, some of our best scientists leave for other countries that will sponsor their work, and those countries may surge ahead of ours in the advances that transform our lives.

In recent years, when it comes to stem cell research, rather than furthering discovery, our Government has forced what I believe is a false choice between sound science and moral values. In this case, I believe the two are not inconsistent. As a person of faith, I believe we are called to care for each other and work to ease human suffering. I believe we have been given the capacity and will to pursue this research and the humanity and conscience to do so responsibly.

It's a difficult and delicate balance. And many thoughtful and decent people are conflicted about or strongly oppose this research. And I understand their concerns, and I believe that we must respect their point of view. But after much discussion, debate, and reflection, the proper course has become clear. The majority of Americans, from across the political spectrum and from all backgrounds and beliefs, have come to a consensus that we should pursue this research; that the potential it offers is great, and with proper guidelines and strict oversight, the perils can be avoided.

That is a conclusion with which I agree. And that is why I am signing this Executive order, and why I hope Congress will act on a bipartisan basis to provide further support for this research. We are joined today by many leaders who have reached across the aisle to champion this cause, and I commend all of them who are here for that work.

Ultimately, I cannot guarantee that we will find the treatments and cures we seek. No President can promise that. But I can promise that we will seek them actively, responsibly, and with the urgency required to make up for lost ground. Not just by opening up this new front of research today, but by supporting promising research of all kinds, including groundbreaking work to convert ordinary human cells into ones that resemble embryonic stem cells.

I can also promise that we will never undertake this research lightly. We will support it only when it is both scientifically worthy and responsibly conducted. We will develop strict guidelines, which we will rigorously enforce, because we cannot ever tolerate misuse or abuse. And we will ensure that our Government never opens the door to the use of cloning for human reproduction. It is dangerous, profoundly wrong, and has no place in our society or any society.

Now, this order is an important step in advancing the cause of science in America. But let's be clear: Promoting science isn't just about providing resources; it's also about protecting free and open inquiry. It's about letting scientists, like those who are here today, do their jobs, free from manipulation or coercion and listening to what they tell us, even when it's inconvenient. Especially when

it's inconvenient. It is about ensuring that scientific data is never distorted or concealed to serve a political agenda and that we make scientific decisions based on facts, not ideology.

By doing this, we will ensure America's continued global leadership in scientific discoveries and technological breakthroughs. And that is essential not only for our economic prosperity but for the progress of all humanity.

And that's why today I'm also signing a Presidential memorandum directing the head of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy to develop a strategy for restoring scientific integrity to Government decisionmaking, to ensure that in this new administration, we base our public policies on the soundest science; that we appoint scientific advisers based on their credentials and experience, not their politics or ideology; and that we are open and honest with the American people about the science behind our decisions. That's how we'll harness the power of science to achieve our goals, to preserve our environment, protect our national security, to create the jobs of the future, and live longer, healthier lives.

As we restore our commitment to science and expand funding for promising stem cell research, we owe a debt of gratitude to so many tireless advocates, some of whom were with us today, many of whom are not. Today we honor all those whose names we don't know, who organized and raised awareness and kept on fighting, even when it was too late for them or for the people they love. And we honor those we know who used their influence to help others and bring attention to this cause, people like Christopher and Dana Reeve, who we wish could be here to see this moment.

One of Christopher's friends recalled that he hung a sign on the wall of the exercise room where he did his grueling regimen of physical therapy. And it read: "For everyone who thought I couldn't do it, for everyone who thought I shouldn't do it, for everyone who said it's impossible, see you at the finish line." Christopher once told a reporter who was interviewing him: If you came back here 10—"if you came back here in 10 years, I expect that I'd walk to the door to greet you." Now, Christopher did not get that chance. But if we pursue this research, maybe one day, maybe not in our lifetime or even in our children's lifetime, but maybe one day, others like Christopher Reeves might.

There's no finish line in the work of science. The race is always with us, the urgent work of giving substance to hope and answering those many bedside prayers, of seeking a day when words like "terminal" and "incurable" are potentially retired from our vocabulary. Today, using every resource at our disposal, with renewed determination to lead the world in the discoveries of this new century, we rededicate ourselves to this work.

So before I sign, I want to just note the people who are on the stage with me. In addition to our outstanding Secretary of Energy, Secretary Chu, we also have Dr. Patricia Bath; we have Dr. H. Robert Horvitz; we have Dr. Janet Rowley; Dr. Harold Varmus, who's going to be the Cochair of my President's Council on Science; we've got Dr. Michael Bishop; and we also have Dr. Peter Agre. So these are an example of the outstanding scientists who we hope will guide us through this process in the years to come.

And with them standing beside me, I'd also like to invite some of my colleagues from Congress who have done just such extraordinary work to share in the limelight, because you guys are still going to have some work to do, and—but it's because of the leadership of so many of you across partisan lines that we've been able to accomplish so much already.

So thank you very much, everybody. Let's go sign this.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:47 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to John P. Holdren, Director-designate, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy; ophthalmologist Patricia E. Bath; H. Robert Horvitz, biologist, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Janet Rowley, human geneticist, University of Chicago; Harold Varmus, Cochair, President's Council of Advisors on

Science and Technology; J. Michael Bishop, chancellor, University of California, San Francisco; and Peter Agre, president, American Association for the Advancement of Science. The Executive order and memorandum are listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks to the United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
March 10, 2009

The President. Thank you. *Si se puede.*

Audience members. Si se puede! Si se puede! Si se puede!

The President. Thank you. Thank you so much. Please, everybody have a seat. Thank you for the wonderful introduction, David. And thank you for the great work that you are doing each and every day. And I appreciate such a warm welcome. Some of you I've gotten a chance to know; many of you I'm meeting for the first time. But the spirit of the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the desire to create jobs and provide opportunity to people who sometimes have been left out, that's exactly what this administration is about. That's the essence of the American Dream. And so I'm very proud to have a chance to speak with all of you.

You know, every so often, throughout our history, a generation of Americans bears the responsibility of seeing this country through difficult times and protecting the dream of its founding for posterity. This is a responsibility that's fallen to our generation. Meeting it will require steering our Nation's economy through a crisis unlike anything that we have seen in our time.

In the short term, that means jump-starting job creation and restarting lending, and restoring confidence in our markets and our financial system. But it also means taking steps that not only advance our recovery, but lay the foundation for lasting, shared prosperity.

I know there are some who believe we can only handle one challenge at a time. And they forget that Lincoln helped lay down the transcontinental railroad and passed the Homestead Act and created the National Academy of Sciences in the midst of civil war. Likewise, President Roosevelt didn't have the luxury of choosing between ending a depression and fighting a war; he had to do both. President Kennedy didn't have the luxury of choosing between civil rights and sending us to the Moon. And we don't have the luxury of choosing between getting our economy moving now and rebuilding it over the long term.

Now, America will not remain true to its highest ideals, and America's place as a global economic leader will be put at risk, unless we not only bring down the crushing costs of health care and transform the way we use energy, but also if we do—if we don't do a far better job than we've been doing of educating our sons and daughters, unless we give them the knowledge and skills they need in this new and changing world.

For we know that economic progress and educational achievement have always gone hand in hand in America. The land-grant colleges and public high schools transformed the economy of an industrializing nation. The GI bill generated a middle class that made America's economy unrivaled in the 20th century. Investments in math and science under President Eisenhower gave new opportunities to young scientists and engineers all across the country. It made possible somebody like a Sergey Brin to attend graduate school and found an upstart company called Google that would forever change our world.

The source of America's prosperity has never been merely how ably we accumulate wealth, but how well we educate our people. This has never been more true than it is today. In a 21st century world where jobs can be shipped wherever there's an Internet connection, where a child born in Dallas is now competing with a child in New Delhi, where your best job qualification is not what you do, but what you know, education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity and success, it's a prerequisite for success.

That's why workers without a 4-year degree have borne the brunt of recent layoffs, Latinos most of all. That's why, of the 30 fastest

growing occupations in America, half require a bachelor's degree or more. By 2016, 4 out of every 10 new jobs will require at least some advanced education or training.

So let there be no doubt: The future belongs to the nation that best educates its citizens. And my fellow Americans, we have everything we need to be that nation. We have the best universities, the most renowned scholars. We have innovative principals and passionate teachers and gifted students, and we have parents whose only priority is their child's education. We have a legacy of excellence and an unwavering belief that our children should climb higher than we did.

And yet, despite resources that are unmatched anywhere in the world, we've let our grades slip, our schools crumble, our teacher quality fall short, and other nations outpace us. Let me give you a few statistics. In eighth grade math, we've fallen to ninth place. Singapore's middle schoolers outperform ours three to one. Just a third of our 13- and 14-year-olds can read as well as they should. And year after year, a stubborn gap persists between how well white students are doing compared to their African American and Latino classmates. The relative decline of American education is untenable for our economy, it's unsustainable for our democracy, it's unacceptable for our children, and we can't afford to let it continue.

What's at stake is nothing less than the American Dream. It's what drew my father and so many of your fathers and mothers to our shores in pursuit of an education. It's what led Linda Brown and Gonzalo and Felicitas Mendez to bear the standard of all who were attending separate and unequal schools. It's what has led generations of Americans to take on that extra job, to sacrifice the small pleasures, to scrimp and save wherever they can, in hopes of putting away enough, just enough, to give their child the education that they never had. It's that most American of ideas, that with the right education, a child of any race, any faith, any station, can overcome whatever barriers stand in their way and fulfill their God-given potential.

Of course, we've heard all this year after year after year after year, and far too little has changed. Certainly, it hasn't changed in too many overcrowded Latino schools; it hasn't changed in too many inner-city schools that are seeing dropout rates of over 50 percent. It's not changing not because we're lacking sound ideas or sensible plans, in pockets of excellence across this country, we're seeing what children from all walks of life can and will achieve when we set high standards, have high expectations, when we do a good job of preparing them. Instead, it's because politics and ideology have too often trumped our progress that we're in the situation that we're in.

For decades, Washington has been trapped in the same stale debates that have paralyzed progress and perpetuated our educational decline. Too many supporters of my party have resisted the idea of rewarding excellence in teaching with extra pay, even though we know it can make a difference in the classroom. Too many in the Republican Party have opposed new investments in early education, despite compelling evidence of its importance. So what we get here in Washington is the same old debate about it's more money versus more reform, vouchers versus the status quo. There's been partisanship and petty bickering, but little recognition that we need to move beyond the worn fights of the 20th century if we're going to succeed in the 21st century.

I think you'd all agree that the time for finger-pointing is over. The time for holding us—holding ourselves accountable is here. What's required is not simply new investments, but new reforms. It is time to expect more from our students. It's time to start rewarding good teachers, stop making excuses for bad ones. It's time to demand results from government at every level. It's time to prepare every child, everywhere in America, to outcompete any worker, anywhere in the world. It's time to give all Americans a complete and competitive education from the cradle up through a career. We've accepted failure for far too long. Enough is enough. America's entire education system must once more be the envy of the world, and that's exactly what we intend to do.

That's exactly what the budget I'm submitting to Congress has begun to achieve. Now, at a time when we've inherited a trillion-dollar deficit, we will start by doing a little

housekeeping, going through our books, cutting wasteful education programs. My outstanding Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, who's here today—stand up, Arne, so everybody can see you. I'm assuming you also saw my Secretary of Labor, Hilda Solis. But Secretary Duncan will use only one test when deciding what ideas to support with your precious tax dollars: It's not whether an idea is liberal or conservative, but whether it works. And this will help free up resources for the first pillar of reforming our schools, investing in early childhood initiatives.

This isn't just about keeping an eye on our children, it's about educating them. Studies show that children in early childhood education programs are more likely to score higher in reading and math, more likely to graduate from high school and attend college, more likely to hold a job, and more likely to earn more in that job. For every dollar we invest in these programs, we get nearly $10 back in reduced welfare rolls, fewer health care costs, and less crime. That's why the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that I signed into law invests $5 billion in growing Early Head Start and Head Start, expanding access to quality childcare for 150,000 more children from working families and doing more for children with special needs. And that's why we are going to offer 55,000 first-time parents regular visits from trained nurses to help make sure their children are healthy and prepare them for school and for life.

Now, even as we invest in early childhood education, let's raise the bar for early learning programs that are falling short. Now, today, some children are enrolled in excellent programs, some children are enrolled in mediocre programs, and some are wasting away their most formative years in bad programs. That includes the one-fourth of all children who are Hispanic, and who will drive America's workforce of tomorrow, but who are less likely to have been enrolled in an early childhood education program than anyone else.

That's why I'm issuing a challenge to our States: Develop a cutting-edge plan to raise the quality of your early learning programs; show us how you'll work to ensure that children are better prepared for success by the time they enter kindergarten. If you do, we will support you with an Early Learning Challenge Grant that I call on Congress to enact. That's how we will reward quality and incentivize excellence and make a down payment on the success of the next generation.

So that's the first pillar of our education reform agenda. The second, we will end what has become a race to the bottom in our schools and instead spur a race to the top by encouraging better standards and assessments. Now, this is an area where we are being outpaced by other nations. It's not that their kids are any smarter than ours, it's that they are being smarter about how to educate their children. They're spending less time teaching things that don't matter and more time teaching things that do. They're preparing their students not only for high school or college, but for a career; we are not. Our curriculum for eighth graders is two full years behind top performing countries. That's a prescription for economic decline. And I refuse to accept that America's children cannot rise to this challenge. They can, and they must, and they will meet higher standards in our time.

So let's challenge our States, let's challenge our States to adopt world-class standards that will bring our curriculums to the 21st century. Today's system of 50 different sets of benchmarks for academic success means fourth grade readers in Mississippi are scoring nearly 70 points lower than students in Wyoming, and they're getting the same grade. Eight of our States are setting their standards so low that their students may end up on par with roughly the bottom 40 percent of the world.

That's inexcusable. That's why I'm calling on States that are setting their standards far below where they ought to be to stop low-balling expectations for our kids. The solution to low test scores is not lowering standards, it's tougher, clearer standards. Standards like those in Massachusetts, where eighth graders are—[*applause*]—we've got the Massachusetts contingent here—[*laughter*]—in Massachusetts, eighth graders are now tying for first, first in the whole world in science. Other forward-thinking States are moving in the same

direction by coming together as part of a consortium. And more States need to do the same. And I'm calling on our Nation's Governors and State education chiefs to develop standards and assessments that don't simply measure whether students can fill in a bubble on a test, but whether they possess 21st century skills like problem-solving and critical thinking and entrepreneurship and creativity.

That is what we'll help them do later this year—that's what we're going to help them do later this year when we finally make No Child Left Behind live up to its name by ensuring not only that teachers and principals get the funding that they need, but that the money is tied to results. And Arne Duncan will also back up this commitment to higher standards with a fund to invest in innovation in our school districts.

Of course, raising standards alone will not make much of a difference unless we provide teachers and principals with the information they need to make sure students are prepared to meet those standards. And far too few States have data systems like the one in Florida that keep track of a student's education from childhood through college. And far too few districts are emulating the example of Houston and Long Beach and using data to track how much progress a student is making and where that student is struggling. That's a resource that can help us improve student achievement and tell us which students had which teachers so we can assess what's working and what's not. That's why we're making a major investment in this area, that we will cultivate a new culture of accountability in America's schools.

Now, to complete our race to the top requires the third pillar of reform, recruiting, preparing, and rewarding outstanding teachers. From the moments students enter a school, the most important factor in their success is not the color of their skin or the income of their parents, it's the person standing at the front of the classroom. That's why our Recovery Act will ensure that hundreds of thousands of teachers and school personnel are not laid off, because those Americans are not only doing jobs they can't afford to lose, they're rendering a service our Nation cannot afford to lose either.

America's future depends on its teachers. And so today, I'm calling on a new generation of Americans to step forward and serve our country in our classrooms. If you want to make a difference in the life of our Nation, if you want to make the most of your talents and dedication, if you want to make your mark with a legacy that will endure, then join the teaching profession. America needs you. We need you in our suburbs. We need you in our small towns. We especially need you in our inner cities. We need you in classrooms all across our country.

And if you do your part, then we'll do ours. That's why we're taking steps to prepare teachers for their difficult responsibilities and encourage them to stay in the profession. That's why we're creating new pathways to teaching and new incentives to bring teachers to schools where they're needed most. That's why we support offering extra pay to Americans who teach math and science to end a teacher shortage in those subjects. It's why we're building on the promising work being done in places like South Carolina's Teachers Advancement Program and making an unprecedented commitment to ensure that anyone entrusted with educating our children is doing the job as well as it can be done.

Now, here's what that commitment means: It means treating teachers like the professionals they are while also holding them more accountable. In up to 150 more school districts, new teachers will be mentored by experienced ones. Good teachers will be rewarded with more money for improved student achievement and asked to accept more responsibilities for lifting up their schools. Teachers throughout a school will benefit from guidance and support to help them improve.

And just as we've given our teachers all the support they need to be successful, we need to make sure our students have the teacher they need to be successful. And that means States and school districts taking steps to move bad teachers out of the classroom. But let me be clear—[*applause*]. Let me be clear: The overwhelming number of teachers are doing an outstanding job under difficult circumstances. My sister is a teacher, so I know how tough teaching can be. But let me be clear: If a teacher is given

a chance or two chances or three chances but still does not improve, there's no excuse for that person to continue teaching. I reject a system that rewards failure and protects a person from its consequences. The stakes are too high. We can afford nothing but the best when it comes to our children's teachers and the schools where they teach.

Now, that leads me to the fourth part of America's education strategy, promoting innovation and excellence in America's schools. One of the places where much of that innovation occurs is in our most effective charter schools. And these are public schools founded by parents, teachers, and civic or community organizations with broad leeway to innovate, schools I supported as a State legislator and a United States Senator.

But right now there are many caps on how many charter schools are allowed in some States, no matter how well they're preparing our students. That isn't good for our children, our economy, or our country. Of course, any expansion of charter schools must not result in the spread of mediocrity, but in the advancement of excellence. And that will require States adopting both a rigorous selection and review process to ensure that a charter school's autonomy is coupled with greater accountability, as well as a strategy, like the one in Chicago, to close charter schools that are not working. Provided this greater accountability, I call on States to reform their charter rules and lift caps on the number of allowable charter schools, wherever such caps are in place.

Now, even as we foster innovation in where our children are learning, let's also foster innovation in when our children are learning. We can no longer afford an academic calendar designed for when America was a nation of farmers who needed their children at home plowing the land at the end of each day. That calendar may have once made sense, but today it puts us at a competitive disadvantage. Our children—listen to this—our children spend over a month less in school than children in South Korea, every year. That's no way to prepare them for a 21st century economy. That's why I'm calling for us not only to expand effective after-school programs, but to rethink the school day to incorporate more time, whether during the summer or through expanded-day programs for children who need it.

Now, I know longer school days and school years are not wildly popular ideas. [*Laughter*] Not with Malia and Sasha—[*laughter*]—not in my family, and probably not in yours. But the challenges of a new century demand more time in the classroom. If they can do that in South Korea, we can do it right here in the United States of America.

Of course, no matter how innovative our schools or how effective our teachers, America cannot succeed unless our students take responsibility for their own education. That means showing up for school on time, paying attention in class, seeking out extra tutoring if it's needed, staying out of trouble. To any student who's watching, I say this: Don't even think about dropping out of school. Don't even think about it.

As I said a couple of weeks ago, dropping out is quitting on yourself, it's quitting on your country, and it's not an option, not anymore. Not when our high school dropout rate has tripled in the past 30 years. Not when high school dropouts earn about half as much as college graduates. Not when Latino students are dropping out faster than just about anyone else. It's time for all of us, no matter what our backgrounds, to come together and solve this epidemic.

Stemming the tide of dropouts will require turning around our low-performing schools. Now, just 2,000 high schools in cities like Detroit and Los Angeles and Philadelphia produce over 50 percent of America's dropouts. And yet there are too few proven strategies to transform these schools. And there are too few partners to get the job done.

So today I'm issuing a challenge to educators and lawmakers, parents and teachers alike: Let us all make turning around our schools our collective responsibility as Americans. And that will require new investments in innovative ideas. That's why my budget invests in developing new strategies to make sure at-risk students don't give up on their education, new efforts to give dropouts who want to

return to school the help they need to graduate, and new ways to put those young men and women who have left school back on a pathway to graduation.

Now, the fifth part of America's education strategy is providing every American with a quality higher education, whether it's college or technical training. Never has a college degree been more important; never has it been more expensive. And at a time when so many of our families are bearing enormous economic burdens, the rising cost of tuition threatens to shatter dreams. And that's why we will simplify Federal college assistance forms so it doesn't take a Ph.D. to apply for financial aid.

That's why we're already taking steps to make college or technical training affordable. For the first time ever, Pell grants will not be subject to the politics of the moment or the whim of the market, they will be a commitment that Congress is required to uphold each and every year. Not only that: Because rising costs mean Pell grants cover less than half as much tuition as they did 30 years ago, we're raising the maximum Pell grant to $5,550 a year and indexing it above inflation. We're also providing a $2,500-a-year tuition tax credit for students from working families. And we're modernizing and expanding the Perkins Loan Program to make sure schools like UNLV don't get a tenth as many Perkins loans as schools like Harvard.

To help pay for all of this, we're putting students ahead of lenders by eliminating wasteful student loan subsidies that cost taxpayers billions each year. All in all, we are making college affordable for 7 million more students with a sweeping investment in our children's futures and America's success. And I call on Congress to join me and the American people by making these investments possible.

Now, this is how we will help meet our responsibility as a nation to open the doors of college to every American. But it will also be the responsibility of colleges and universities to control spiraling costs. We can't just keep on putting more money in and universities and colleges not doing their part to hold down tuitions. And it's the responsibility of our students to walk through the doors of opportunity.

In just a single generation, America has fallen from 2d place to 11th place in the portion of students completing college. That is unfortunate, but it's by no means irreversible. With resolve and the right investments, we can retake the lead once more. And that's why, in my address to the Nation the other week, I called on Americans to commit to at least one year or more of higher education or career training, with the goal of having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by the year 2020. And to meet that goal, we are investing $2.5 billion to identify and support innovative initiatives across the country that achieve results in helping students persist and graduate.

So let's not stop at education with college. Let's recognize a 21st century reality: Learning doesn't end in our early twenties. Adults of all ages need opportunities to earn new degrees and new skills, especially in the current economic environment. And that means working with all our universities and schools, including community colleges—a great and undervalued asset—to prepare workers for good jobs in high-growth industries and to improve access to job training not only for young people who are just starting their careers, but for older workers who need new skills to change careers. And that's going to be one of the key tasks that Secretary Solis is involved with, is making sure that lifelong learning is a reality and a possibility for more Americans.

It's through initiatives like these that we'll see more Americans earn a college degree or receive advanced training and pursue a successful career. And that's why I'm calling on Congress to work with me to enact these essential reforms and to reauthorize the Workforce Reinvestment Act. That's how we will round out a complete and competitive education in the United States of America.

So here's the bottom line: yes, we need more money; yes, we need more reform; yes, we need to hold ourselves more accountable for every dollar we spend. But there's one more ingredient I want to talk about. No government policy will make any difference unless we also hold ourselves more accountable as parents, because government, no matter how wise or efficient, cannot turn off the TV or put away the video

games. Teachers, no matter how dedicated or effective, cannot make sure your child leaves for school on time and does their homework when they get back at night. These are things only a parent can do. These are things that our parents must do.

I say this not only as a father, but also as a son. When I was a child my mother and I lived overseas, and she didn't have the money to send me to the fancy international school where all the American kids went to school. So what she did was she supplemented my schooling with lessons from a correspondence course. And I can still picture her waking me up at 4:30 in the morning, 5 days a week, to go over some lessons before I went to school. And whenever I'd complain and grumble and find some excuse and say, "Aww, I'm sleepy," she'd patiently repeat to me her most powerful defense. She'd say, "This is no picnic for me either, buster." [*Laughter*]

You know, when you're a kid you don't think about the sacrifices they're making. She had to work; I just had to go to school. But she'd still wake up every day to make sure I was getting what I needed for my education. And it's because she did this day after day, week after week, because of all the other opportunities and breaks that I got along the way, all the sacrifices that my grandmother and my grandfather made along the way, that I can stand here today as President of the United States. It's because of the sacrifices—[*applause*]. See, I want every child in this country to have the same chance that my mother gave me, that my teachers gave me, that my college professors gave me, that America gave me.

You know these stories; you've lived them as well. All of you have a similar story to tell. You know, it's—I want children like Yvonne Bojorquez to have that chance. Yvonne is a student at Village Academy High School in California. Now, Village Academy is a 21st century school where cutting-edge technologies are used in the classroom, where college prep and career training are offered to all who seek it, and where the motto is "Respect, Responsibility, and Results."

Now, a couple of months ago, Yvonne and her class made a video talking about the impact that our struggling economy was having on their lives. And some of them spoke about their parents being laid off or their homes facing foreclosure or their inability to focus on school with everything that was happening at home. And when it was her turn to speak, Yvonne said: "We've all been affected by this economic crisis. [We] are all college-bound students; we're all businessmen and doctors and lawyers and all this great stuff. And we have all this potential, but the way things are going, we're not going to be able to [fulfill it]."

It was heartbreaking that a girl so full of promise was so full of worry that she and her class titled their video, "Is Anybody Listening?" So today there's something I want to say to Yvonne and her class at Village Academy: I am listening; we are listening; America is listening. And we will not rest until your parents can keep your jobs—we will not rest until your parents can keep their jobs and your families can keep their homes, and you can focus on what you should be focusing on, your own education; until you can become the businessmen, doctors, and lawyers of tomorrow, until you can reach out and grasp your dreams for the future.

For in the end, Yvonne's dream is a dream shared by all Americans. It's the founding promise of our Nation: That we can make of our lives what we will; that all things are possible for all people; and that here in America, our best days lie ahead. I believe that. I truly believe if I do my part, and you, the American people, do yours, then we will emerge from this crisis a stronger nation and pass the dream of our founding on to posterity, ever safer than before.

Thank you very much. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:54 a.m. at the Washington Marriott Metro Center. In his remarks, he referred to David Lizarraga, chairman, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, who introduced the President; Sergey Brin,

cofounder and president, Google, Inc.; Linda Brown Thompson, plaintiff in the 1954 *Brown* v. *Board of Education* Supreme Court decision; and his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations
March 10, 2009

President Obama. Well, let me just say that I am very grateful for the Secretary-General taking the time to visit with us today. As I've said previously, I think the United Nations can be an extraordinarily constructive, important partner in bringing about peace and stability and security to people around the world. And the Secretary-General has shown extraordinary leadership during his tenure as Secretary-General.

We had a wide-ranging conversation. There are a host of international issues that we both agree have to be addressed. We talked about the economic crisis and how that's affecting not only developed countries, but very poor countries around the world, and the potential threat to food supplies if it continues to worsen, and the need for international coordination.

We discussed the issue of Afghanistan, where the Secretary-General has been very helpful in bringing together a donors conference. We're going to be talking about how we can ramp up and better coordinate civilian activities in Afghanistan so that we can be more effective in that region. And we also talked about the upcoming elections in Afghanistan.

We discussed Haiti and the concerns that we both have about a long-suffering country that's just gone through a terrible crisis as a consequence of hurricanes.

And one of the things that we spent I think the most time talking about was the issue of Darfur. As many of you are aware, we have a ongoing crisis in Darfur that has heightened recently, where the Khartoum Government has kicked out some of the most important nongovernmental organizations that provide direct humanitarian aid to millions of people who've been internally displaced in the Sudan. And we have a potential crisis of even greater dimensions than what we already saw.

I impressed upon the Secretary-General how important it is from our perspective to send a strong, unified, international message that it is not acceptable to put that many people's lives at risk; that we need to be able to get those humanitarian organizations back on the ground; and that the United States wants to work as actively as possible with the United Nations to try to resolve the immediate humanitarian crisis and to start putting us on a path for long-term peace and stability in the Sudan.

And this is something that the United States Secretary to the United Nations, Secretary Rice, has been working on diligently. It's something that we care about deeply. And we're hopeful that we can make some significant progress.

Last point that I would make is, Secretary Ban has spoken extensively about the issue of climate change, and as all of you know, this is something that my administration is deeply concerned about as well. We welcome his leadership. And we're looking forward to working with some of the major countries involved to figure out how, even in the midst of economic crisis, we can move forward and prevent what could be longer-term ecological crises that could have a tremendously adverse effect on the international economy if we don't take action.

Secretary-General Ban. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I'm very much honored to meet you and discuss on all the matters of our mutual concern and interest between the United Nations and the United States.

It's a very encouraging sign coming from your office to the United Nations that we are meeting at such an early stage of your administration. And I count on your great leadership. United Nations and United States share common visions and objectives for peace and stability, development and human rights. As Secretary-General of the United Nations, you can count on me, my full commitment and working together with you.

I think year 2009 is a make-or-break year, full of crises on many fronts, for United Nations, for United States, and whole international community as a whole. For that, we need to work very closely to address all the issues. I have been closely following with a deepest admiration what you have been taking, demonstrating great leadership, very dynamic and visionary, to overcome this international economic crisis. I welcome your very strong national stimulus packages, and I'm also looking forward to meeting you and discussing with you and other leaders at G–20 summit meeting in London.

What I'd like to emphasize, as Secretary-General of the United Nations, is that leaders of G–20 should not lose sight of the challenges and plight of hundreds of hundreds of millions of poorest of people of the developing countries who have been impacted by this economic crisis.

The leaders of industrialized countries should keep their commitment on Millennium Development Goals and official development assistance and help developing countries overcome in food security and also help them to adapt and mitigate climate change.

Climate change, as, Mr. President, you have said, is a priority for the United Nations and for whole international community. I am going to focus and work together with the leaders of the world to address this issue, to unlock all this massive investment for the green economic recovery and also to save our planet. This is an issue of our era. I count on your strong commitment and leadership. Whole world is now looking at your leadership. And I'm willing to—I'm committed to work together with you.

We have discussed, as President Obama just mentioned, on many issues, starting from Afghanistan, Sudan, and Iraq and Pakistan, and disarmament, and nonproliferation issues like North Korean nuclear issues. And on all of these issues, we—I'm committed to work together with you. I count on your leadership.

United Nations stands ready to work together with you, Mr. President, to make this make-or-break year turn into make-it-work, full of optimism and resolution. And thank you very much, Mr. President.

President Obama. Thank you so much, Mr. Secretary.

Secretary-General Ban. Thank you, sir.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:23 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Economic Advisers and an Exchange With Reporters
March 11, 2009

The President. All right. Well, I just wanted to let you guys know that Secretary Geithner is going to be discussing our approach to the G–20 today, and this is going to be I think a critical meeting at a obviously critical time in the world's economy.

We've got two goals in the G–20. The first is to make sure that there is concerted action around the globe to jump-start the economy. The second goal is to make sure that we are moving forward on a regulatory reform agenda that ensures that we don't see these same kinds of systemic risks and the potential for this kind of crisis again in the future.

Now, I think that the United States has actually taken a significant leap on a number of these steps that are required. We've already passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. We are doing a good job stimulating our economy here at home.

We're moving forward in stabilizing the financial system through a whole host of steps that have already been taken and a number of steps that we intend to take in the future to make sure that the financial system is solvent,

that our banks are strong, and that we start lending again to businesses and consumers.

We also have already been in discussions with the relevant members of the congressional committees to talk about how we can move forward on a regulatory framework. You heard from the Federal Reserve Chairman Bernanke yesterday about the need for us to revamp our regulations. That's not just something that we want to do domestically, but we ought to make sure that we're coordinating with the other G–20 countries.

A few other areas that haven't been discussed as much, the United States is part of a integrated global economy. And so, we have to not only think about what's happening here at home, but in order for us to grow businesses, create jobs here at home, we also have to be mindful about what's happening overseas. And that's why, at this G–20 meeting, one of the things that Secretary Geithner is going to be talking about is how can we make sure that emerging markets, developing countries that may be very hard hit as a consequence of the contracting economy, how do we make sure that they remain stable, that they can still purchase American goods; how do we make sure also that we are not falling into protectionist patterns and that world trade is still something that countries support and embrace as opposed to scaling back on.

So there are going to be a host of issues that we need to discuss. The job of Secretary Geithner is to lay the groundwork so that—with other finance ministers from the other G–20 countries so that when the leaders of these various countries actually show up, we can go ahead and craft the kind of agreement that's going to be necessary, not just for the stability of the financial system, but ultimately, to make sure that we're creating jobs and that businesses are reinvesting here in the United States.

We can do a really good job here at home with a whole host of policies, but if you continue to see deterioration in the world economy, that's going to set us back. And I think it's very important for the American people to understand that as aggressive as the actions we are taking have been so far, it's very important to make sure that other countries are moving in the same direction, because the global economy is all tied together.

Tim, anything you want to add?

Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner. Mr. President, I travel to Europe tomorrow night to meet with the G–20 finance ministers and central bank governors. We need to bring the world together to put in place a very substantial, sustained program of support for recovery and growth. And we want to bring together a new consensus globally on how to strengthen this global financial system so that a crisis like this never happens again.

There's been a lot of talk and a lot of ideas over the last 2 years in these areas. It's time now for us to move together and to begin to act to put in place a stronger framework of reforms. A lot of good work has happened, but we need to now bring this together so that we're together as a world economy working together.

Everything we do in the United States will be more effective if we have the world moving with us. You know, we're the most productive economy in the world, most productive workers in the world, but they need markets for their products that are expanding, and we have a lot of work to do, but I think we can make a lot of progress.

The President. Good. And just one last point I want to make. I've already had discussions with a number of world leaders on these issues, obviously, when Gordon Brown came to visit, when Prime Minister Aso of Japan came. We have already started laying the groundwork. You're starting to see a lot of coordination at various levels, both in terms of the financial regulators as well as those who are shaping potential stimulus packages in their own countries.

So I'm actually optimistic about the prospects. Everybody understands that we're in this together. I think the G–20 countries are going to be seeking a lot of cooperation. One of the messages that is consistently hammered home when I talk to foreign leaders is their recognition that a strong U.S. economy will help their economy. And so they're rooting for our success.

We've got to make sure that we're rooting for theirs as well, because we've got a lot of exporters. Until just a few months ago, exports were

actually one of the areas where we were still getting some lift in the economy; that has now gone away. It's now vanished because purchasing power in many of these other countries, as well as credit in these other countries, has contracted. So we've got to spend some time thinking about how we're going to strengthen them as well, in order to make sure that ultimately our plans here at home are successful.

All right? Thank you, everybody.

Omnibus Appropriations Act of 2009

Q. Did you sign that omnibus yet?

The President. Not yet. We're going to——

Q. ——planning on these earmarks——

The President. We're going to have a signing. We're going to have a signing. All right. Thank you, guys. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:47 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom.

Remarks on Government Spending and Earmark Reform
March 11, 2009

Good morning. I ran for President pledging to change the way business is done in Washington and to build a Government that works for the people by opening it up to the people. And that means restoring responsibility and transparency and accountability to actions that the Government takes. And working with the Congress over my first 50 days in office, we've made important progress toward that end.

Working together, we passed an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act that's already putting people back to work doing the work that America needs done. We did it without the customary congressional earmarks, the practice by which individual legislators insert projects of their choosing. We're implementing the Recovery Act with an unprecedented level of aggressive oversight and transparency, including a web site, recovery.gov, that allows every American to see how their tax dollars are spent and report on cases where the system is breaking down.

I also signed a directive that dramatically reforms our broken system of Government contracting, reining in waste and abuse and inefficiency, saving the American taxpayers up to $40 billion each year in the process.

And I've laid out plans for a budget that begins to restore fiscal discipline so we can bring down the $1.3 trillion budget deficit we've inherited and pave the way for our long-term prosperity. For the first time in many years, we've produced an honest budget that makes the hard choices required to cut our deficit in half by the end of my first term in office.

Now, yesterday Congress sent me the final part of last year's budget, a piece of legislation that rolls nine bills required to keep the Government running into one, a piece of legislation that addresses the immediate concerns of the American people by making needed investments in line with our urgent national priorities. That's what nearly 99 percent of this legislation does, the nearly 99 percent that you probably haven't heard much about.

What you likely have heard about is that this bill does include earmarks. Now, let me be clear: Done right, earmarks have given legislators the opportunity to direct Federal money to worthy projects that benefit people in their districts, and that's why I have opposed their outright elimination. And I also find it ironic that some of those who rail most loudly against this bill because of earmarks actually inserted earmarks of their own and will tout them in their own States and their own districts.

But the fact is that on occasion, earmarks have been used as a vehicle for waste and fraud and abuse. Projects have been inserted at the 11th hour, without review and sometimes without merit, in order to satisfy the political or personal agendas of a given legislator, rather than the public interest. There are times where earmarks may be good on their own, but in the context of a tight budget might not be our highest priority. So these practices

hit their peak in the middle of this decade, when the number of earmarks had ballooned to more than 16,000 and played a part in a series of corruption cases.

In 2007, the new Democratic leadership in Congress began to address these abuses with a series of reforms that I was proud to have helped to write. We eliminated anonymous earmarks and created new measures of transparency in the process, so Americans can better follow how their tax dollars are being spent. These measures were combined with the most sweeping ethics reforms since Watergate. We banned gifts and meals and made sure that lobbyists have to disclose who they're raising campaign money from, and who in Congress they send it to. So we've made progress. But let's face it, we have to do more.

I am signing an imperfect omnibus bill because it's necessary for the ongoing functions of Government, and we have a lot more work to do. We can't have Congress bogged down at this critical juncture in our economic recovery. But I also view this as a departure point for more far-reaching change.

In my discussions with Congress, we have talked about the need for further reforms to ensure that the budget process inspires trust and confidence instead of cynicism. So I believe as we move forward, we can come together around principles that prevent the abuse of earmarks.

Now, these principles begin with a simple concept: Earmarks must have a legitimate and worthy public purpose. Earmarks that Members do seek must be aired on those Members' web sites in advance, so the public and the press can examine them and judge their merits for themselves. Each earmark must be open to scrutiny at public hearings, where Members will have to justify their expense to the taxpayer.

Next, any earmark for a for-profit, private company should be subject to the same competitive bidding requirements as other Federal contracts. The awarding of earmarks to private companies is the single most corrupting element of this practice, as witnessed by some of the indictments and convictions that we've already seen. Private companies differ from the public entities that Americans rely on every day, schools and police stations and fire departments.

When somebody is allocating money to those public entities, there's some confidence that there's going to be a public purpose. When they are given to private entities, you've got potential problems. You know, when you give it to public companies—public entities like fire departments, and if they are seeking taxpayer dollars, then I think all of us can feel some comfort that the State or municipality that's benefiting is doing so because it's going to trickle down and help the people in that community. When they're private entities, then I believe they have to be evaluated with a higher level of scrutiny.

Furthermore, it should go without saying that an earmark must never be traded for political favors.

And finally, if my administration evaluates an earmark and determines that it has no legitimate public purpose, then we will seek to eliminate it, and we'll work with Congress to do so.

Now, I know there are Members in both Houses with good ideas on this matter. And just this morning, the House released a set of recommendations for reform that I think hold great promise. I congratulate them on that. Now I'm calling on Congress to enact these reforms as the appropriation process moves forward this year. Neither I nor the American people will accept anything less.

It's important that we get this done to ensure that the budget process works better, the taxpayers are protected, and that we save billions of dollars that we so desperately need to right our economy and address our fiscal crisis. Along with that reform, I expect future spending bills to be debated and voted on in an orderly way and sent to my desk without delay or obstruction, so that we don't face another massive, last-minute omnibus bill like this one.

I recognize that Congress has the power of the purse. As a former Senator, I believe that individual Members of Congress understand their districts best, and they should have the ability to respond to the needs of their communities. I don't quarrel with that. But leadership requires setting an example and setting priorities, and the magnitude of the

economic crisis we face requires responsibility on all our parts.

The future demands that we operate in a different way than we have in the past. So let there be no doubt: This piece of legislation must mark an end to the old way of doing business and the beginning of a new era of responsibility and accountability that the American people have every right to expect and demand.

If we're going to solve our economic crisis, if we're going to put Americans back to work, if we're going to make the investments required to build a foundation for our future growth, then we must restore the American people's faith that their Government is working for them, and that it's on their side. That's the Government I promised, that's the Government I intend to lead.

Thank you very much, everybody. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:23 a.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

Remarks on Signing an Executive Order Establishing a White House Council on Women and Girls
March 11, 2009

Thank you so much. Well, today, as we continue our celebration of international Women's History Month, I'm proud to sign this Executive order establishing the women's—the White House Council on Women and Girls. It's a council with a mission that dates back to our founding, to fulfill the promise of our democracy for all our people.

I sign this order not just as a President, but as a son, a grandson, a husband, and a father, because growing up, I saw my mother put herself through school and follow her passion for helping others. But I also saw how she struggled to raise me and my sister on her own, worrying about how she'd pay the bills and educate herself and provide for us.

I saw my grandmother work her way up to become one of the first women bank vice presidents in the State of Hawaii. But I also saw how she hit a glass ceiling, how men no more qualified than she was kept moving up the corporate ladder ahead of her.

I've seen Michelle, the rock of the Obama family, juggling work and parenting with more skill and grace than anybody that I know. But I also saw how it tore at her at times, how sometimes when she was with the girls she was worrying about work, and when she was at work she was worrying about the girls. It's a feeling that I share every day.

In so many ways, the stories of the women in my life reflect the broader story of women in this country, a story of both unyielding progress and also untapped potential. Today, women make up a growing share of our workforce and the majority of students in our colleges and our law schools. Women are breaking barriers in every field, from science and business to athletics and the Armed Forces. Women are serving at the highest levels of my administration, and we have Madam Speaker presiding over our House of Representatives. I had the privilege of participating in a historic campaign with a historic candidate, who we now have the privilege of calling Madam Secretary.

But at the same time, when women still earn just 78 cents for every dollar men make, when one in four women still experiences domestic violence in their lifetimes, when women are more than half of our population, but just 17 percent of our Congress, when women are 49 percent of the workforce, but only 3 percent of our Fortune 500 CEOs, when these inequalities stubbornly persist in this country, in this century, then I think we need to ask ourselves some hard questions. I think we need to take a hard look at where we're falling short and who we're leaving out and what that means for the prosperity and the vitality of our Nation.

And I want to be very clear: These issues are not just women's issues. When women make less than men for the same work, it hurts

families who find themselves with less income and have to work harder just to get by. When a job doesn't offer family leave, that also hurts men who want to help care for a new baby or an ailing parent. When there's no affordable childcare, that hurts children who wind up in second-rate care or spending afternoons alone in front of the television set.

And when any of our citizens cannot fulfill their potential because of factors that have nothing to do with their talent, their character, their work ethic, that says something about the state of our democracy. It says something about whether we're honoring those words put on paper more than two centuries ago, whether we're doing our part, like generations before us, to breathe new life into them in our time.

That, above all, is the true purpose of our Government, not to guarantee our success, but to ensure that in America all things are still possible for all people. Not to solve all our problems, but to ensure that we all have the chance to pursue our own version of happiness. To give our daughters the chance to achieve as greatly as the women who join us today. That's the impact our Government can have.

It's the impact of a Health and Human Services Department that funds research by women like Dr. Nina Fedoroff, a biotechnology and life science pioneer who won the National Medal of Science in 2006. It's the impact of a Defense Department that works to recruit and promote women, so that women like Sergeant Major Michele Jones, who was the Army's highest ranking enlisted woman before she retired, can strengthen our military with their leadership.

It's the impact of a Department of Education that enforces title IX, so athletes like Olympic gold medalist Dominique Dawes and Lisa Leslie have a level playing field to compete and to win. It's the impact of a White House and a Congress that fight for legislation like the Lilly Ledbetter fair pay restoration act, so that all women can get paid what they deserve. I'm very proud this was the very first bill that I signed into law.

And that's why I'm establishing this Council, not just to continue efforts like these, but to enhance them. The Council will be composed of the heads of every Cabinet and Cabinet-level agency and will meet on a regular basis. We have many of those Cabinet members here. Some of the men showed up; we put them in the second row. [*Laughter*] But they're going to be fighting—[*applause*]—they're going to be part of this Council, and it's going to meet on a regular basis.

Its purpose is very simple: to ensure that each of the agencies in which they're charged takes into account the needs of women and girls in the policies they draft, the programs they create, the legislation they support. It's not enough to only have individual women's offices at individual agencies, or only have one office in the White House. Rather, as former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright once said, in our Government, "responsibility for the advancement of women is not the job of any one agency; it's the job of all of them." And she should know; she helped lead an interagency women's initiative during the Clinton administration.

At the same time, given the critical importance of its work, this Council must have strong leadership from the White House and direct accountability to me. And that's why I'm appointing Valerie Jarrett, one of my closest advisers and most senior members of my administration, to lead it. Tina Tchen, another senior member of my White House staff, will serve as the Council's Executive Director.

In the end, while many of the challenges women and girls face are new, the work of this Council is not; it's been with us for generations. Frances Perkins, who was President Franklin Roosevelt's Secretary of Labor and the first woman to serve in the Cabinet, a great hero of the New Deal, described it well when she said: "I had a kind of duty to other women to walk in and sit down on the chair that was offered and so establish the rights of others long hence and far distant in geography to sit in the high seats"—to sit in the high seats.

That is why I'm standing here today, because of what my mother and grandmother did for me, because of their hard work and sacrifice and unflagging love. That's what Michelle's doing right now, thinking every day about making sure that Malia and Sasha have the same opportunities as anybody's sons do. That's

why so many of us are here today, because of the women who came before us, who were determined to see us sit in the high seats; women who reached for the ballot and raised families and traveled long, lonely roads to be the first in the boardroom or in the courtroom or on the battlefield and in the factory floor; women who cracked and shattered those glass ceilings so that my daughters, and all of our sons and daughters, could dream a little bigger and reach a little higher.

So now it's up to us to carry that work forward, to ensure that our daughters and granddaughters have no limits on their dreams, no obstacles to their achievements, and that they have opportunities their mothers and grandmothers and great- grandmothers never dreamed of. That's the purpose of this Council. Those are the priorities of my Presidency. And I look forward to working with all of you to fulfill them in the months and years to come.

All right, so I'm going to go sign this thing. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:31 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng; Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; Dominique Dawes, member, 1996 U.S. women's Olympic gymnastics team; and Lisa Leslie, center, 2008 U.S. women's Olympic basketball team. The Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on Signing the Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009
March 11, 2009

Today I have signed into law H.R. 1105, the "Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009." This bill completes the work of last year by providing the funding necessary for the smooth operation of our Nation's Government.

As I announced this past Monday, it is a legitimate constitutional function, and one that promotes the value of transparency, to indicate when a bill that is presented for Presidential signature includes provisions that are subject to well-founded constitutional objections. The Department of Justice has advised that a small number of provisions of the bill raise constitutional concerns.

- *Foreign Affairs.* Certain provisions of the bill, in titles I and IV of Division B, title IV of Division E, and title VII of Division H, would unduly interfere with my constitutional authority in the area of foreign affairs by effectively directing the Executive on how to proceed or not proceed in negotiations or discussions with international organizations and foreign governments. I will not treat these provisions as limiting my ability to negotiate and enter into agreements with foreign nations.

- *United Nations Peacekeeping Missions.* Section 7050 in Division H prohibits the use of certain funds for the use of the Armed Forces in United Nations peacekeeping missions under the command or operational control of a foreign national unless my military advisers have recommended to me that such involvement is in the national interests of the United States. This provision raises constitutional concerns by constraining my choice of particular persons to perform specific command functions in military missions, by conditioning the exercise of my authority as Commander in Chief on the recommendations of subordinates within the military chain of command, and by constraining my diplomatic negotiating authority. Accordingly, I will apply this provision consistent with my constitutional authority and responsibilities.

- *Executive Authority to Control Communications with the Congress.* Sections 714(1) and 714(2) in Division D prohibit the use of appropriations to pay the salary of any Federal officer or employee who interferes with or prohibits certain communications between Federal em-

ployees and Members of Congress. I do not interpret this provision to detract from my authority to direct the heads of executive departments to supervise, control, and correct employees' communications with the Congress in cases where such communications would be unlawful or would reveal information that is properly privileged or otherwise confidential.

- *Legislative Aggrandizements (committee-approval requirements).* Numerous provisions of the legislation purport to condition the authority of officers to spend or reallocate funds on the approval of congressional committees. These are impermissible forms of legislative aggrandizement in the execution of the laws other than by enactment of statutes. Therefore, although my Administration will notify the relevant committees before taking the specified actions, and will accord the recommendations of such committees all appropriate and serious consideration, spending decisions shall not be treated as dependent on the approval of congressional committees. Likewise, one other provision gives congressional committees the power to establish guidelines for funding costs associated with implementing security improvements to buildings. Executive officials shall treat such guidelines as advisory. Yet another provision requires the Secretary of the Treasury to accede to all requests of a Board of Trustees that contains congressional representatives. The Secretary shall treat such requests as nonbinding.

- *Recommendations Clause Concerns.* Several provisions of the Act (including sections 211 and 224(b) of title II of Division I, and section 713 in Division A), effectively purport to require me and other executive officers to submit budget requests to the Congress in particular forms. Because the Constitution gives the President the discretion to recommend only "such Measures as he shall judge necessary and expedient" (Article II, section 3 of the Constitution), the specified officers and I shall treat these directions as precatory.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
March 11, 2009.

NOTE: H.R. 1105, approved March 11, was assigned Public Law No. 111–8.

Interview With Regional Reporters
March 11, 2009

The President. So I usually don't start these off with a long statement. Obviously, our overarching focus right now is the economy. I am very mindful of the hardships that are taking place all throughout the country: families who are losing their homes, losing their jobs, losing their health care. I get a sampling of the letters that are sent to me every day, and some of the stories are just heartbreaking.

And everything that we're doing is focused on not only pulling this economy out of what is the worst recession since the Great Depression, but also looking at ways that we can set a foundation for long-term economic growth. You know, the days of growing the economy through an overheated housing market or through people running up exorbitant credit card bills is over.

We've got to put our growth model on a different footing, and that means that we've got to deal with our health care system and reduce costs for families, businesses, and governments. It means that we have to think through our energy policy so that we're not so badly dependent on foreign oil. It means we've got to improve our education system so that our young people are equipped with the skills and knowledge that they're going to need to get jobs in the future.

And so the Recovery and Reinvestment Act that we passed reflected those priorities. You know, we had tax cuts to the middle class, but also investments on health information

technologies and doubling renewable energy, a enormous effort to jump-start school reform at the same time as we are providing some much needed relief to States, so that they wouldn't be laying off teachers and firefighters and cops, and that we could rebuild our infrastructure.

The budget that I've now prepared and will be going before Congress and debated over the next month reflects many of those common priorities, and we're going to be building off of the progress that we made in the first 50 days. Now is the time, I think, for us to deal with health care in a serious way and start reducing costs as well as expand coverage. We're going to have to keep pushing on the energy front not just with things like the smart grid, but also figuring out how do we move to more renewable energies.

And on education, how do we build on the reforms that we talked about during the campaign and that are funded, at least temporarily, through the stimulus package. And I gave a major speech on education priorities yesterday.

I think that there's going to be some battles surrounding this budget, there always are. Obviously, at the same time, as we're moving this budget forward, I'm spending probably the majority of my time stabilizing the financial system. There are some who've argued that we can't do all of these things at once and that we should instead just focus on Wall Street and banking and not deal with the enormous pressures that families are feeling on a day-to-day basis. I think that would be a mistake. I think that extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures. And so even as we're working on financial stabilization, reregulating Wall Street, we're going to keep on pressing to get the investments that will ultimately lead to long-term economic growth.

So I also have Iraq and Afghanistan to deal with—[*laughter*]—but I figured that would at least get us started. So why don't we just go around the room. I'll try to make sure that everybody gets a question. Since we've got somewhat limited time, I'll try to keep my answers short, if you guys can keep your questions short.

All right. Michael [Michael Coleman, Albuquerque Journal].

Mexico-U.S. Border Security/Immigration Reform

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, for having us today. Since we're only going to get maybe one shot, I want to ask you a question that's of great concern to the people of my State of New Mexico. And as you're fully aware, Mexico is besieged by drug-related violence. In my State there's a very real concern that this violence will spill over to the border; in a few cases, it already has. What specifically does the administration plan to do to help contain this violence? And on a related note, if there's anything you could say about immigration reform and when we might see some sort of action on that front?

The President. Well, as you know, the first meeting with a foreign leader that I had after my election was with President Calderon in Mexico, who I believe is really working hard and taking some extraordinary risks under extraordinary pressure to deal with the drug cartels and the corresponding violence that's erupted along the borders.

So this past week Admiral Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, visited with his counterparts in Mexico. Janet Napolitano, our director of Homeland Security, a border State Governor, has been convening meetings with all the relevant agencies and consulted with the Governors down there.

We expect to have a full—a fully—or a comprehensive approach to dealing with these issues of border security that will involve supporting Calderon and his efforts in a partnership, also making sure that we are dealing with the flow of drug money and the guns south, because it's really a two-way situation there. The drugs are coming north, we're sending funds and guns south, and as a consequence, these cartels have gained extraordinary power. And so, our expectation is to have a comprehensive policy in place in the next few months.

With respect to immigration reform, to some degree the collapse of housing construction in the country has slowed the flow of illegal immigrants coming into the country, but it

remains a serious concern. And our approach is to do some things administratively to strengthen border security, to fix the legal immigration system, because a lot of the pressure—or a lot of the impetus towards illegal immigration involves a broken legal system. People want to reunify families, and they don't want to wait 10 years.

I think we can make some progress on that front, and we've started to talk to all the parties involved and both parties here in Washington about the prospects of taking legislative steps. But, obviously, we've got a lot on our plate right now. And so what we can do administratively, that's where we're going to start.

Economic Recovery/Infrastructure Investments

Q. Thank you very much. Mr. President, the numbers that came out today show that Indiana lost 59,400 manufacturing jobs last year. You've been in Elkhart; you've seen the ravage there. Aside from a bailout to the auto industry and the RV industry, are there policies that the State of Indiana ought to be embracing to strengthen its economy, or is the manufacturing sector in Indiana and elsewhere doomed?

The President. Well, look, obviously, I come from a neighboring State, and if you think about northwest Indiana, it's as much a part of the Chicago regional economy as Indiana's. And so I'm very mindful of what's been happening. But I think that also points to where the opportunities are. Both Chicago and Indianapolis have done relatively well, those regions, because of a diversified economy. So what started off as hardcore traditional manufacturing towns made the transition to other areas: building on the universities, setting up research parks, thinking about innovative sectors in bio-medicine or in energy technologies.

And so part of what I think every State should be doing right now is figuring out, A, how do we invest in our people so that we're attracting world-class businesses who are looking for world-class employees? I think getting K–12 education right, not short-changing higher education, I think those things are absolutely critical; thinking about where can—where do strategic infrastructure investments make sense. You know, if you think about the Midwest, one of the problems is, is that—this is my stenographer. She just wants to make sure that I'm not tripping over myself.

One of the exciting things that we put in our stimulus package, for example, was high-speed rail, and is there an opportunity to connect Chicago, Indianapolis, Detroit, Milwaukee, St. Louis, so that we're linking up some of these major metropolitan hubs in ways that provide us a competitive advantage in the world economy.

I think making sure that we are setting up research facilities or encouraging and attracting researchers, venture capital that spins off new technologies into commercial applications, some States do that better than others. Obviously, Silicon Valley is the best example of it, but Massachusetts, along Route 128, did it very well. There's no reason why working with some of the world-class universities that exist in the heartland in the Midwest that we don't adopt some of those same practices.

So we're going to do everything we can to preserve our manufacturing base. We have to recognize that some of those workers who used to manufacture steel now are going to be manufacturing solar panels. And we've got to make sure that they're equipped to do that. Okay?

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

Alternative Locations for the Detention of Terrorist Suspects

Q. You named a special envoy today to oversee the closure of Guantanamo. I'd like to ask you about that. Among the places being—possibly being considered as an alternative to those prisons is Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. There's a wall of opposition——

The President. Where my mother was born, by the way.

Q. Exactly. There's a wall of opposition to that: local officials, people in the area, and plus from the congressional delegations of those States. How would you explain the rationale between the possibility—if a place like Leavenworth would be chosen, the rationale behind that, and reassuring people of their safety and security?

The President. Well, keep in mind, we haven't made any decisions on this. But also

recognize that these individuals who have been imprisoned, many of whom are very violent or who have been detained, many of whom are violent and are pledging violence against the United States, once captured are similar to criminals who have engaged in violence of other types. They are a serious risk, but so are many of the people who are currently in prison. And we would not—we would never put people into a situation that elevated the risks for surrounding communities. And that will, obviously, be something that we take very seriously as we're making these decisions moving forward.

But we already have experience with terrorists who are in Federal prisons. And there's been no indication that the safety and security of prison guards or the surrounding communities have been compromised as a consequence. That doesn't mean that it's not a serious issue. I recognize why people are concerned. We haven't made any firm decisions on this yet. But I have every confidence that we can determine the ultimate fates of those in Guantanamo in a way that's consistent with our values, consistent with our ideals, and that keeps us safe and secure.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

Charter Schools/Education Reform

Q. Mr. President, yesterday you called for eliminating restrictions on the number of charter schools, while enforcing some vigorous standards. In Ohio, the Governor has called charter schools a destructive influence on public education, a few years ago tried to have a moratorium on new charters, now wants to cut State spending by about 20 percent for charter schools and restrict some other funding. I'm wondering whether you've ever talked with him about this, and is this just a fundamental disagreement between the two of you?

The President. You know, I haven't had a conversation with Governor Strickland. I know that part of his concern was prompted by some bad experiences with charters in Ohio that weren't up to snuff. And if you looked at my statement yesterday, what I said was, not only should we lift the cap on charters, we should also shut down charters that aren't meeting standards. I don't think that's inconsistent with Governor Strickland's position.

My goal here is to create laboratories of innovation so that in the public school system, we are on a race to the top as opposed to stuck in the old ways of doing things. And we've got to; we've got to do that. In your home town of Cleveland, I don't know off the top of my head what the dropout rate is, but I've got to assume that it's hovering around 50 percent. If you look at the number of children going through the Cleveland public schools who are actually prepared to go to college, it's probably 1 out of 7 or 8 or 10. And that's just not acceptable. It's not acceptable for them; it's not acceptable in terms of America's economic future. And so we've got to experiment with ways to provide a better educational experience for our kids, and some charters are doing outstanding jobs. So the bottom line is to try to create innovation within the public school system that can potentially be scaled up, but also to make sure that we are maintaining very high standards for any charter school that's created.

Ethanol/Alternative Fuel Sources

Q. Well, I have to ask you an ethanol question.

The President. Go ahead.

Q. The biofuels—as you probably know, your Agriculture Secretary is joining the ethanol industry and calling on the EPA to do an immediate increase in the ethanol limit to 12 or 13 percent, in advance of doing a higher 15 or 20 percent. Engine manufacturers, the automakers have been opposed to this. What is your position? Are you going to get involved in this decision by EPA?

The President. At some point I usually get involved. If it—somebody explained to me that nothing comes to my desk if it's easy. [*Laughter*] It means that somebody else has solved it. And I suspect that this one will be reconciling a lot of different issues.

As you know, I've been a supporter of biofuels. I think it is an important ingredient in our overall energy independence. I've also said—and I said during the campaign trail in Iowa, in front of farmers, that it was important for us to transition to the next generation of

biofuels, that we've got to do a much better job of developing cellulosic ethanol, that corn-based ethanol, over time, is not going to provide us with the energy efficient solutions that are needed.

And I want to make sure, though, as somebody who comes from a corn-growing State, that the progress that we've made in building up a biofuels infrastructure and the important income generation that has come from ethanol plants, that that is sustained, that that's maintained. So our challenge, I think, is to see our current ethanol technology as a bridge to the biofuels technologies of the future. And that's what we want to invest in, and that's what I'll be directing my Department of Agriculture to focus on.

Federal Budget

Q. Mr. President, you already mentioned the budget fight. I'd like to talk to you a little bit more about that, the one that's coming up. The budget outline is an extraordinary document in many ways and encapsulates a large part of the governing agenda that your administration has laid out. It's no surprise the Republicans don't really like it. But the interesting thing is, it may be the centrist Democrats who are the—this evolving coalition of centrist Democrats and Republicans in the Senate and, to some degree, the Blue Dogs in the House, that are the real problem as they begin to look at the budget and find objections. Could you talk a little bit about that, the coming budget fight, but specifically what you can do to make sure that the vision in that document simply isn't dismantled as it goes through the messy budget process?

The President. Let me sort of provide you an overarching frame, because I think that, you know, there's—the way that it has been discussed, I think, in some cases overstates the degree to which there's some massive transformational shift. On the other hand, in some ways it understates, I think, the significant reforms that are embedded in the budget.

So point number one, this is a pretty honest budget. You've got billions of dollars that we've put into the budget that for the last 8 years at least have never been acknowledged as costs. Fixing AMT, which is about $70 billion a year, that was just off the books; the war in Iraq, off the books. The way budgeting was done, it presumed that there was never, ever a national emergency arising out of a hurricane, a flood, or tornado; that none of them existed.

Now, if we had continued on—had we applied the same gimmicks and tricks to our budget as folks have been putting up with for the last 8 years, including Members of Congress, we could make our numbers look really pretty. We thought that that was the wrong approach. So number one, we have provided, I think, a honest document of what the costs of Government are right now.

Second point is that on the revenue side, I campaigned during the election, and was not shy about it, that we needed to restore some balance to our Tax Code; that over the last decade, the average worker has seen no increase in their wages or incomes when you factor in inflation, just been flat, whereas the top 5 percent, but more particularly the top 1 percent, and even more particularly the top one-tenth of 1 percent, had seen extraordinary gains in their incomes. And what I said was, is that we needed to return to the tax structure that existed during the nineties under Bill Clinton and let the Bush tax cuts lapse. That's what this budget does.

Now, if you think about it, just to go back to the budget gimmick issue before, since 2001, part of the trick that had been perpetrated on the American people was to say that the Bush tax cuts would lapse in 2010, and that's why this wasn't a huge budget buster. So in effect, all we're doing is actually moving forward with the premise of the budget that the Republicans presented about 5, 6 years in a row, which was that this was supposed to lapse in 2010. For them to suggest now that this is some radical assault on the rich, I think, just makes no sense whatsoever.

Here's what we do, though, we say that on health care, energy, and education, it's time for us to make investments that had been put off for decades and had made us less competitive. And every dime of increased spending that we include in those areas we offset either with additional revenues or with cuts, and we cut a lot of stuff.

I mean, we're looking at billions of dollars of cuts out of Medicare's Advantage program, where we're subsidizing insurers but not making seniors any healthier. We are making significant cuts in procurement, $40 billion that we've identified by making sure that we're not engaging in the same no-bid contracting that has been such a problem.

In fact, if you look at the trajectory of our nondefense discretionary spending, which is what usually people think about when they think about whether a budget is loaded up with a bunch of nonessential spending, following our budget, we would drive nondefense discretionary spending down to the lowest levels since they started keeping records back in '62, much lower as a percentage of GDP than it was under Reagan or under Bush.

So really what the big arguments are going to be about are, number one, do you believe that now is the time for us to deal with health care in a serious way? And if you're serious about long-term fiscal responsibility and dealing with Medicare and Medicaid, then you can't say we're not going to deal with health care now. That's our biggest problem. If health care continues to go up at 6, 7, 8, 10 percent a year, then we can't solve our budget deficits, and we can't solve our national debt.

So I'm happy to have that argument with anybody. I also think that on the energy front, if we aren't willing to start putting a price on carbons that are contributing to climate change but also encourage us to use fossil fuels that we end up importing from other countries, then we can talk all we want about energy independence; we're not going to get there.

And on education, if we're pricing people out of the college market, if nobody wants to teach because teachers don't get paid much, if we're not investing in early childhood education, if we're not investing in science and technology, then we're going to fall behind.

So whether we're talking about Republicans or my fellow Democrats, my argument is going to be that these are the right priorities for America, these are the right priorities for long-term economic growth. Yes, they require some uncomfortable votes. If it was easy, I'm assuming it would have been done 20 years ago or 30 years ago. It's not easy, but it's the right thing to do.

The President's Staff/Food Safety

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I wanted to ask you about your Cabinet and your senior staff. By my count, you have about seven folks from the Midwest, six from the West, a crowd from the Northeast, and with maybe the exception of your able-bodied Press Secretary——

The President. Gibbs?

Q. Mr. Gibbs.

The President. He's the only Southerner?

Q. I think so.

The President. You guys are feeling neglected?

Q. Yes. [*Laughter*] So I'm wondering why is that, and what you don't like about the South?

The President. I love the South. [*Laughter*]

Q. And I'd also ask—like to ask you about—I think this is an unrelated question—the Salmonella outbreak and food safety originated in Georgia, and what you think needs to be done about that?

The President. Well, look, the—I love the South. I've got to admit that we have thought a lot about finding the very best people for the jobs and haven't been thinking with great intensity about regionalism, because partly, except for food and sports teams and weather, I mean, we're one country. And I think that people are so mobile these days that I tend to think of ourselves as all just Americans. But if you've got some great Southerners—[*laughter*]—who want to work for us, please let me know, because we're always open. I love the South.

Food safety is a serious concern, and I've directed both FDA—I've directed both the Department of Agriculture and Health and Human Services to work to come up with a plan so that a lot of these different agencies that have some jurisdiction over food safety are integrated in a much more effective way and things aren't falling through the cracks.

There's a lot of work that needs to be done in working on the front-end with food producers so that there are better warning signals of potential problems than we have

right now. And we also need to be able to trace sources of food contamination much more quickly than we're doing right now. And technology can be helpful, but the key is actually reorganizing the agencies that are responsible so that they're working more in concert than they are right now.

Tobacco Regulations/Food and Drug Administration

Q. Thank you, and thanks for doing these. I actually have a follow up on FDA, and that is, do you still support that agency regulating tobacco, and if so——

The President. Yes.

Q. ——what's the timeline you'd like to see Congress working on that? And is the agency up to the task if we're still having—just like we saw last month with the peanut butter—food problems?

The President. You know, we're probably going to have an announcement on this fairly soon, so I don't want to step on my own story, but I do think that the FDA has an important role to play on an issue that, obviously, has enormous impact on the health of the American people. That's all you're going to get out me there. [*Laughter*]

Go ahead.

Voting Rights

Q. I have a question sort of similar to the Atlanta question. The Voting Rights Act, as you know, does not—Birmingham——

The President. I was just about to say, the—don't I have some Birmingham people in my Cabinet? [*Laughter*]

Q. Well, Gibbs is from Auburn.

The President. There you go, it's close. [*Laughter*]

Q. The Voting Rights Act, as you know, does not apply—especially section 5—does not apply to the entire country. The South is still required to get preclearance for election-related changes. There's an argument in Alabama, and I think some other Southern States, that they've sort of outgrown that; they no longer need that close scrutiny from the Justice Department to make those kinds of sometimes very simply changes. I know in 2006 you supported reauthorization, but do you still think the South needs this close supervision of Justice on—under section 5?

The President. Well, I got to be careful here because I'm a law professor, so I may get too deep on the weeds on this stuff, get——

Q. No, try it. Go for it. [*Laughter*]

The President. But the idea behind section 5 of the Voting Rights Act is that if there are discriminatory barriers to voting, that the Justice Department has some mechanism to actually deal with it; that you don't just leave it up to the States to self-correct, but that you've got some basis for intervention.

The most obvious kinds of violations don't happen very often these days, the classic being sort of the poll tax or the county clerk who just turns away African American voters. That's not really the key issue in the Voting Rights Act these days.

Typically, the issues that come up now have to do with whether there is a meaningful opportunity to select a candidate of your choice. If you've got a situation in which there is very racially polarized voting, and you've got, you know, 30 percent of the population is Hispanic or African American and the rest is majority white and it's a polarized part of the country and you've got at-large voting systems, well, it's conceivable that on a city council or a county board, you'd never have any African Americans or Hispanics on that board. So that's what section 5 of the Voting Rights Act does, is to try to preclear, see if there are any changes in the voting systems that would prevent people from exercising a meaningful vote.

The key concept, I think, in judging whether or not a jurisdiction still should be jumping through that hoop is probably the degree to which there are still highly racially polarized voting, under the parlance, racial black vote. And, you know, there are probably some parts of the South that were under section 5 that if you looked at the data are no longer that polarized. There are other parts that are probably still very polarized.

So I think it's the task of the courts to look—and Congress, in future reauthorizations—to look at the evidence and to see is that

kind of polarization still taking place. And is that—you know, it's not enough just to look and see is that 1 factor out of 10 or 15 factors, is it such a significant factor that, in fact, it's really preventing certain groups from having any representation whatsoever. So I guess that's all a long way of saying that you really have to look at the data and examine whether or not it still has some applicability.

The only other thing I'd—the only other point I'd make about this is keep in mind that the preclearance is just that, it requires before you make a change to go before the DC Circuit or the Federal courts and just show that these changes aren't a problem. That's not such a huge hurdle to jump through. So I think it's legitimate to err on the side of caution before you started eliminating that requirement.

Q. Thank you.

Mexico-U.S. Border Security/U.S. Drug Control Policy

Q. Mr. President, I wanted to follow up on the border question and the violence in Mexico. President Calderon recently decided to send an additional 5,000 of his troops to the border. The Texas Governor has asked for a thousand U.S. troops or Border agents to reinforce the border on our side. What is the tipping point, in your mind, where the violence gets so bad that you need to act?

And related to that, you named a new drug czar today. You've taken that position out of the Cabinet. You, in the past, have talked about decriminalization of marijuana. Are we still engaged in a war on drugs?

The President. Well, let me first start on the troop issue. We've got a very big border with Mexico. And so I'm not interested in militarizing the border. I am interested in providing the kind of—in creating the kind of partnership with the Mexican Government that ensures the safety of U.S. citizens, the safety of Mexican citizens, and allows for the continued cross-border trade that's so important to the region.

If we're going to examine whether and if National Guard deployments would make sense and in what circumstances they would make sense as part of this overall review of our border situation, I haven't drawn any conclusions yet. I don't have a particular tipping point in mind. I think it's unacceptable if you've got drug gangs crossing our borders and killing U.S. citizens. I think if one U.S. citizen is killed because of foreign nationals who are engaging in violent crime, that's enough of a concern to do something about it.

With respect to—what was the second question?

Q. If decriminalization of the marijuana laws——

The President. I think what gave me pause on that question was I think you—I'm not sure it's accurate to say that I—well, the implication was somehow that I think we should weaken our drug laws. That's never been my position. I think that what we do have to—I think the approach that we do need to take is to make sure that we have a both/and approach as opposed to an either/or approach. I think traditionally the debate is either interdiction, criminalization, longer drugs—longer prison sentences for not only dealers, but users; that's one approach. And then the other approach would be sort of a public health, decriminalization approach.

My attitude is we do have to treat this as a public health problem, and we have to have significant law enforcement. And, you know, if we can reduce demand, obviously, that allows us to focus more effectively where interdiction is needed, where we've got to go after serious drug dealers and narcotrafficking.

Right now I think that we're fighting with one hand tied behind our back because our effort to lower demand is grossly underfunded, not as effective as it needs to be. The average person who is seeking serious substance abuse treatment in a big city like Dallas or Chicago typically has a 3-, 4-, 6-month waiting list to get enrolled in a program. I think that's a problem, and most law enforcement officials, I think, would agree that it is a problem.

Communication of Economic Stabilization Policy

Q. Mr. President, I have a general question about your overall communication strategy as

President. I mean, here we are on day 51, I think this is—and I appreciate you talking to us regional reporters. You've done outreach with bloggers; I think you've done outreach to columnists across the political spectrum. There's still a lot of fear out there about the economy, the stock market. People aren't buying cars; they're not buying homes. Do you feel that you've done a good enough job so far in really laying out what the game plan is for your administration in tackling this financial mess that's pulled the rug out from under the economy?

The President. Well, you know, I think that we can always do a better job. Keep in mind, it's only been 2 weeks since I gave a joint session speech to Congress, the day after which everybody said, "Boy, that was really clear," and, "We have a clear sense of what's going on." You know, the reviews were pretty good. I recognize, I think, the degree of concern that people have.

We've been in office all of 7 weeks so far. This is a crisis that was 8 years in the making, maybe longer in some, you know, certain aspects of it. The buck stops with me, and we're responsible, but it's going to take some time. And the truth of the matter is that the American people, I think, understand that it's going to take some time. If you look at the public polling, they recognize it's going to take a while to dig ourselves out of the hole.

We passed the stimulus package, and I've been talking almost every day about elements of the stimulus package, the recovery package that are going to be having an immediate impact in the various hometowns that you represent. I think Mayor Rybak, the day we signed it, talked about the 57 police officers that wouldn't be laid off as a consequence of the stimulus.

So I think people are getting the message that slowly, surely we are making progress on these fronts. We released a housing plan that is providing significant relief, and you're already starting to see an uptick in refinancings that are providing families with relief. And in certain pockets of the country you're starting to see housing prices stabilize after a long drop.

You know, I think the one area where there's still significant uncertainty has to do with the bank issue. And that's obviously a particular concern to Wall Street. The challenge for us there is that we are in the process of undergoing—or conducting these stress tests of the banks to get a better sense of what their capital positions are and how strong they are. And what we don't want to do is to prejudge those tests or make a lot of statements that cause a lot of nervousness around banks that are already having difficulty right now.

So on that particular issue, you know, we've got to, I think, explain to the American people—and as I said, we can always to do better—why it is so important to get lending going again, get credit flowing to businesses and consumers. I'll be making statements about this tomorrow, the next day, in my radio addresses, next week. And the main message that I'm going to be delivering is that it's going to take some time to get out of this deep hole we're in, but we're going to get out of it.

The other message, though, is that there are no shortcuts to long-term economic growth, and we can't just keep on doing the same things that we were doing before and somehow expect that all our problems are going to be solved. We've got to tackle some of these things like health care, energy, and education that have been put off for too long.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I have a question about NASA, in honor of the Discovery launch tonight. Right now, the retirement of the space shuttle in 2010 is going to devastate the space coast economy down in Florida. You're looking at about 3,500 job losses, at the least, at the center, which will multiply to as many as 28,000 jobs throughout that entire area.

Right now, you reaffirmed President Bush's decision to retire the shuttle in 2010. I guess what I want to know is why you decided to keep that 2010 retirement date for the shuttle and what type of plans you may have to try to save the space coast from an economic crater?

The President. Well, first of all, we've authorized, and we're budgeted for, additional shuttle launches that had not been scheduled. And so we're extending the life of the shuttle, because, A, I think it is doing some important

work, and B, we're very mindful of the economic impact of the space program in the region.

I will soon be appointing a new NASA director. I think it's important for the long-term vibrancy of our space program to think through what NASA's core mission is and what the next great adventures and discoveries are under the NASA banner.

NASA has yielded—or the space shuttle program has yielded some extraordinary scientific discoveries. But I think it's fair to say that there's been a sense of drift to our space program over the last several years. We need to restore that sense of excitement and interest that existed around the space program. And shaping a mission for NASA that is appropriate for the 21st century is going to be one of the biggest tasks of my new NASA director.

Once we have that vision, then I think it's going to be much easier to build support for expanding our space efforts. But what I don't want NASA to do is just sort of limp along here. And I don't think that's good for the economy of the region either.

New Orleans, Louisiana

Q. Mr. President, in appointing a FEMA Administrator last week, were you signaling your intention to keep the agency as part of the Department of Homeland Security? And now that you've sent some Cabinet members to New Orleans, might we expect your presence in the city, perhaps even for the new hurricane season?

The President. I'm just still trying to figure out my schedule for tomorrow—[*laughter*]—so I don't want to get too far ahead of myself. Sending Secretary Donovan and Napolitano signaled that we're going to be focused on New Orleans's reconstruction, and we're going to be paying a lot of attention to the systems that are in place to protect from hurricanes in the future.

And I—what was the first question?

Federal Emergency Management Agency

Q. On FEMA, and whether FEMA stays within DHS.

The President. FEMA—I have not made a final decision on that. But whether FEMA stays inside DHS or is once again a standalone agency, the one thing you can be certain of is that it's going to do an outstanding job performing its tasks. And I think that the new director has gotten uniformly high grades. Whenever you got Haley Barbour, Jeb Bush, and Democrats in Congress agreeing on somebody, they know what they're doing.

Republican Opposition/High-Speed Rail

Q. Thanks, Mr. President. I wondered if, first, you could elaborate as a President from Chicago, a little bit on your own vision for high-speed rail in the Midwest, particularly the idea of a Chicago-to-Milwaukee-to-Twin Cities link.

And then a completely unrelated political question, whether you're at all surprised by the degree of, sort of, discipline and unity we're seeing in a Republican opposition to your agenda right now?

The President. Well, let me answer the political question first. I'm not surprised, because opposition is always easy; saying no to something is easy. Saying yes to something and figuring out how to solve problems and governing, that's hard. And on this budget debate, for example, if you've got people who on the one hand say, "We want to bring down the long-term deficit, but we don't want to cut certain programs that are important. Oh, and by the way, we don't want to raise taxes"—well, sounds good. And I'd like to make sure that the Chicago Bulls win the championship every year and the White Sox win the Series, but you know, show me how you're going to do it.

So I'm not impressed by just being able to say no. I think what will be interesting is the degree to which my Republican colleagues start putting forward in the form of an affirmative agenda that's not based on ideology, but on the very real struggles and pain that people are feeling right now around the country, and how do we get this economy back on its feet.

In terms of high-speed rail, I think there's enormous opportunities here. Now, I would have loved to have seen more done on high-speed rail in the recovery package, because I

think it's the right direction for us to go in. I could not credibly claim that all of the investments that are necessary are short term enough to be in a recovery package, as opposed to be part of our broader transportation bills and budget.

But think about it. I mean, we've laid a transcontinental railway system during the Civil War. Railroads were always the pride of America and stitched us together. Now Japan, China, all of Europe have high-speed rail systems that put ours to shame. And the potential economic benefits of a high-speed rail link between Chicago and Milwaukee, so that people are avoiding I–94, or the length between Chicago and St. Louis, Detroit, all those Midwestern cities, I think is enormous, and is a very real option with—although gas prices are low right now, it becomes a very meaningful option for people who don't want to take off their shoes, drive to an airport, pay for parking, suffer delays. So I think there's a very real opportunity.

I should point out that the opportunities around the rail are not just in high-speed rail. I mean, there's some basic freight rail issues in Chicago, Milwaukee, the Midwest that can also be solved and would help with the whole distribution of goods in the region that would save business a lot of money. And I hope that we end up spending some time focused on that during the transportation reauthorization.

Last question, because I'm out of time.

Economic Stabilization/Upcoming G–20 Meeting

Q. Mr. President, thanks again for doing this. Given the worldwide context of the economic crisis you're dealing with, are the stimulus measures that you've championed, in your mind, sufficient to right the economy, absent similar actions by other large economies in the world?

And if I could just turn the question around in a way, there are estimates of, like, a hundred million have been plunged into poverty worldwide. Does the U.S.—do you have any interest in their situation, whether from the standpoint of self-interest, national security, or morality?

The President. Well, it's a great question. I anticipated this question, even though I didn't know you were going to ask it, Jim [James O'Toole, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette], because Secretary Geithner is now headed off to the G–20 finance minister's meeting as a precursor to our G–20 meeting. And what we specifically talked about was, number one, our economic recovery is linked up to the economic recovery of the rest of the world and vice versa. Up until a few months ago, exports were one of the few bright spots in our economy.

The collapse of worldwide demand costs American jobs and American businesses. And so we want to work with other countries to make sure that they're promoting the kinds of fiscal stimulus packages that can boost demand in their countries. It's important that we don't fall into a protectionist mentality so that each country, even as it's stimulating, is also still promoting the kinds of trade that can help us all grow.

And part of the G–20 agenda is also thinking about the adverse impact that this global economic slowdown is having on the poorest of the poor. I think we have all of the above, a moral, national security, and economic interest in making sure that people in those countries are not suffering even more than they were already suffering, because that can be profoundly destabilizing in all sorts of ways.

You know, there were a couple of questions about the border situation with Mexico. You know, if Mexico's economy cannot provide a living wage of any sort to a growing Mexican population that, obviously, is going to put more pressure on us in terms of immigration, more people being pushed into the drug trade, and so on.

And that's just one example. There are more severe examples of instability in places like North Africa in the face of drought or shortage of food supplies that can end up causing us real problems.

So figuring out how the developed countries, wealthier countries, even in the midst of hardship, can provide some relief and assistance to those countries as well, I think, is going to be very important.

All right? Okay, guys. You put me through the paces.

Q. Thank you much.

Q. Thank you.

The President. I broke a sweat. [*Laughter*]

Q. You didn't break a sweat. [*Laughter*]

The President. Thank you, guys. Appreciate it. Take care.

NOTE: The interview began at 2:05 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Ambassador Daniel Fried, Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasian Affairs, in his capacity as Special Envoy for the Guantanamo Bay detention facility closure; Gov. Theodore Strickland of Ohio; White House Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs; Mayor R.T. Rybak of Minneapolis, MN; Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Shaun L.S. Donovan; Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano; W. Craig Fugate, Administrator-designate, Federal Emergency Management Agency; Gov. Haley R. Barbour of Mississippi; former Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; and Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner. Reporters referred to Secretary of Agriculture Thomas J. Vilsack; President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico; Gov. J. Richard Perry of Texas; and R. Gil Kerlikowske, Director, White House Office of National Drug Control Policy. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 12. Audio was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Iran
March 11, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, stating that the Iran emergency declared on March 15, 1995, is to continue in effect beyond March 15, 2009.

The crisis between the United States and Iran resulting from the actions and policies of the Government of Iran that led to the declaration of a national emergency on March 15, 1995, has not been resolved. The actions and policies of the Government of Iran are contrary to the interests of the United States in the region and pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to Iran and maintain in force comprehensive sanctions against Iran to respond to this threat.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
March 11, 2009.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 12. The notice of March 11 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Implementation Conference
March 12, 2009

Hello, everybody. Please have a seat. I've got my Illinois contingent over here. Please, everybody have a seat. Thank you so much.

I just wanted to stop by and say hello. I know that you heard from Joe Biden at the top of this session, and I wanted to let you know

that we are very grateful to all of you for taking the time to come. We hope that this is being a productive session. And I want to emphasize that all of you are at the frontlines of what is probably the most important task that we have in this country over the next couple of years, and that's getting the economy started again.

I think all of you in your respective roles are hearing stories of people who are going through extraordinary hardship in your respective States. And we passed this American Recovery and Reinvestment Act because we strongly believe that this is an opportunity not only to deal with the immediate crisis, but also to lay the foundations for long-term growth and prosperity in this country.

And, you know, the American people are behind what we're doing. And the question then becomes, are we going to be able to deliver for them? They are going to be watching very carefully. And there are those who believe that Government doesn't have a role to play in this recovery. There are those who believe that we should be focusing exclusively on Wall Street when it comes to this crisis, and that we don't have time to worry about infrastructure, and we don't have time to worry about our health systems, and we don't have time to think about how we're going to improve our educational systems.

And all of you, what you do in the coming weeks and coming months, over the next couple of years is going to make a huge difference in whether or not the trust that the American people have placed in us is justified.

So my main message to all of you is, I think you're up to the task; I think you guys will do extraordinary work with using these precious tax dollars that the American people have given up in order to deliver on the kind of economic growth—short-term and long-term—and job creation that's going to be so important.

But we're going to need to work really hard, and we're going to have to make sure that every single dollar is well spent. We've got to go above and beyond what I think is the typical ways of doing business in order to make sure that the American people get the help that they need and that our economy gets the boost that it needs.

And so I've said before—I know Joe emphasized this to you earlier—if we see money being misspent, we're going to put a stop to it, and we will call it out, and we will publicize it. On the other hand, if the money is being spent as it needs to be spent, to rebuild our roads and our bridges and our schools and making sure that we are putting in place the kinds of infrastructure foundations that are necessary for economic growth over the long term, then I think all of us will benefit and our voters and our constituents, the people we work for, are going to be extraordinarily grateful.

So you've got this wonderful mission, and, you know, it's rare where you get a chance to put your shoulder to the wheel of history and move it in a better direction. This is such an opportunity. I think—I hope all of you seize it. I know this is very tough work because you've got a lot of money coming out quickly, it's got to be spent wisely, you don't always have the infrastructure, the organizational structures to accommodate all this stuff right away, and you're going to have to build that and do so in record time.

But looking around, you guys look like pretty capable people. So I have great confidence in you, and I think you're going to do a wonderful job. We appreciate you. Good luck. And I'll be seeing you at some ribbon cuttings. All right. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:10 a.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Vice President Joe Biden.

Remarks at the National Defense University
March 12, 2009

Thank you, General Wilson, for the wonderful introduction and your hospitality. Thank you to Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen for the extraordinary service that they render to this

country. I want to acknowledge the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who are doing outstanding work and have been a great support to me, and Ambassador Ross.

To each of you who are here: for your service to our country and your commitment to our security, I want to say thank you on behalf of the American people. You know, I think so highly of NDU that I picked one of your alumni, General Jim Jones, to be my National Security Adviser.

And I know many of you have served in harm's way, and for that you have the respect of a grateful nation. And before I go any further, I want to acknowledge all of our troops now serving overseas. They have shouldered an awesome responsibility. They have performed brilliantly. And they have the full support of the American people.

Today it is my privilege to join you in dedicating this building to the memory of President Abraham Lincoln. We know, of course, that there are many monuments to Lincoln's memory across this country. His words are written into stately walls and his image is printed on our currency. His story is taught in our schools and his name is synonymous with freedom. You and I live in the Union that he saved, and we inherited the progress that he made possible.

Yet despite this far-reaching legacy, it is still—to quote the man himself—"altogether fitting and proper" that we should set aside this ground, and dedicate this hall, in his memory, because Lincoln's Presidency was characterized by war, even as his ambition was a just and lasting peace. Here, in this indispensable institution, we find a living legacy to that ambition. Here, at National Defense University, men and women come together to think, to learn, and to seek new strategies to defend our Union while pursuing the goal of a just and lasting peace.

The grounds that make up this campus tell us an interesting story about how America can pursue this goal. Fort McNair was built over two centuries ago to protect a young Capital against invasion. Its defenses were traditional: training for soldiers, stockpiles of arms, fortifications to hold advancing armies at bay. It was overrun by a British attack in the War of 1812, and treated the wounded warriors of the Civil War in Lincoln's day.

And then, just over a century ago, President Theodore Roosevelt came here to lay the cornerstone of the Army War College. In dedicating the school, Roosevelt spoke words that resonate to this day. He said, "More and more, it has become evident in modern warfare that the efficiency of the unit, of the individual officer, and the individual enlisted man is going to be the prime factor in deciding the fate of fought fields."

More than 100 years later, Roosevelt's insight remain the essential mission of this institution: the belief that even as our weapons have grown more powerful, individuals still determine the strength of our national security; the belief that individual Americans remain, as Roosevelt said, "the prime factor in deciding the fate of fought fields."

The battlefields that we now face would be unfamiliar to Lincoln and Roosevelt. The days when President Lincoln would wander down to the War Department's telegraph office to get reports from the front are long past, but the threats to our Nation are real, and they are direct.

From this fort, which was founded to defend the city of Washington against invasion, you could stand on September 11, 2001, and watch the smoke from the Pentagon billowing up across the Potomac. The attacks of 9/11 signaled the new dangers of the 21st century. And today, our people are still threatened by violent extremists, and we're still at war with terrorists in Afghanistan and Pakistan who are plotting to do us harm.

Yet terrorism and extremism make up just one part of the many challenges that confront our Nation. In Iraq, we will surely face difficult days ahead as we responsibly end a war by transitioning to Iraqi control of their country. A historic economic downturn has put at stake the prosperity that underpins our strength, while putting at risk the stability of governments and the survival of people around the world. We're threatened by the spread of the world's deadliest weapons, by emerging cyber threats, and by a dependence on foreign oil

that endangers our security and our planet. Poverty, disease, the persistence of conflict and genocide in the 21st century challenge our international alliances, partnerships, and institutions, and must call on all of us to reexamine our assumptions.

These are the battlefields of the 21st century; these are the threats that we now face. And in these struggles, the United States of America must succeed, and we will succeed. We also know that the old approaches won't meet the challenges of our time. Threats now move freely across borders, and the ability to do great harm lies in the hands of individuals as well as nations. No technology, no matter how smart, can stop the spread of nuclear weapons. No army, no matter how strong, can eliminate every adversary. No weapon, no matter how powerful, can erase the hatred that lies in someone's heart.

So it falls to institutions like this and to individuals like you to help us understand the world as it is, to develop the capacities that we need to confront emerging danger, and to act with purpose and pragmatism to turn this moment of peril into one of promise. That's how we will find new pathways to peace and security. That is the work that we must do.

Now, make no mistake: This Nation will maintain our military dominance. We will have the strongest Armed Forces in the history of the world. And we will do whatever it takes to sustain our technological advantage, and to invest in the capabilities that we need to protect our interests, and to defeat and deter any conventional enemy. But we also need to look beyond this conventional advantage as we develop the new approaches and new capabilities of the 21st century, and in that effort, this university must play a critical role.

Our troops are faced with complex missions. Increasingly, they're called upon to defeat nimble enemies while keeping local populations on their side. And that's why my administration is committed to growing the size of our ground forces, and to investing in the skills that can help our troops succeed in the unconventional mission that they now face. We must understand different languages and different cultures; we must study determined adversaries and developing tactics. That's the education that takes place within the walls of this university, and that is the work that must be done to keep our Nation safe.

America must also balance and integrate all elements of our national power. We cannot continue to push the burden on to our military alone, nor leave dormant any aspect of the full arsenal of American capability. And that's why my administration is committed to renewing diplomacy as a tool of American power, and to developing our civilian national security capabilities. This effort takes place within the walls of this university, where civilians sit alongside soldiers in the classroom. And it must continue out in the field, where American civilians can advance opportunity, enhance governance and the rule of law, and attack the causes of war around the world. We have to enlist our civilians in the same way they—we enlist those members of the armed services in understanding this broad mission that we have.

And finally, we know that the United States cannot defeat global threats alone. There is no permanent American solution to the security challenges that we face within any foreign nation, nor can the world meet the tests of our time without strong American leadership. And that's why my administration is committed to comprehensive engagement with the world, including strengthened partnerships with the foreign militaries and security forces that can combat our common enemies. Those partnerships are advanced here, within the walls of this university, where we welcome men and women from around the world to study alongside Americans, to understand our values, to forge partnerships, and hopefully friendships, that contribute to a safer world.

The lesson of history is that peace and security do not come easily. Each person who passes through this university will play a different role. Some of you will serve in uniform abroad, or help train troops here at home. Some will be diplomats, intelligence officers, or congressional staffers; others will work in the private sector. Some will rise to be senior officers and top strategists, and some of you might even decide to run for public office, although I'd warn you about that. [*Laughter*]

Your story is your own and the education that you're receiving will help you advance it. But you're here because you've also accepted the responsibility of having your story as part of the larger American story. Your story is serving your fellow citizens in the wider world. And my message to you today is simple: Your individual service makes all of the difference. You will make the decisions, large and small, that will help shape our future.

So as we dedicate this building where you and future generations will be prepared to make those choices, remember that the true strength of our Nation comes not from the might of our arms or the scale of our wealth, it comes from the power of our ideals: democracy, liberty, equality, justice, and unyielding hope.

Those ideals are embedded in our national character because generations of Americans have chosen to live them in their own lives, to advance them through their service and through their sacrifice. This is the truth that Lincoln understood, that pragmatism must serve a common purpose, a higher purpose. That's the legacy that we inherit. And that, in the end, is how government of the people, and by the people, and for the people, will endure in our time.

So thank you, God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:28 p.m. in Abraham Lincoln Hall. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. Frances C. Wilson, USMC, president, National Defense University, who introduced the president; and Dennis Ross, Special Adviser to the Secretary of State for The Gulf and Southwest Asia.

Remarks and a Discussion With the Business Roundtable
March 12, 2009

The President. Thank you. Thank you so much. Please, everybody have a seat. I want to get to Q&A as quickly as possible, so let me dive right in. First of all, thank you. It's a pleasure to be here this afternoon. I see a lot of friends in the room. It's especially important, I think, for us to be meeting today with the Business Roundtable, because the companies that you lead account for nearly 10 million jobs and generate trillions of dollars in revenue each year. Your companies have fueled the prosperity of communities across the country and the success stories of countless individuals. And they've enriched our Nation; they've served as a tribute to the enduring spirit of American capitalism.

But for over three decades, the Business Roundtable is also taking a broader view of your responsibilities as chief executives. You've looked beyond the bottom line and the next quarter to the long-term health of your company. You've not only served as accomplished leaders, but as engaged citizens, citizens who understand that it is in the interest of both your companies and your country to have a workforce that's highly educated, healthy, and prosperous, to have a market that is free, but also fair, and to live in a nation that's willing to invest in its own future. You understand the public responsibility of private enterprise.

It's fitting, then, that we meet at this moment, because over the last few weeks a spirited debate has emerged in Washington, a debate over what it will take to ultimately break the back of this recession and strengthen our economy for the long run. It's a debate that centers on one key question: Does the greatest economic crisis in our lifetime warrant extraordinary action to deal with the array of challenges we face? Or should we limit our efforts and try to deal with them incrementally or one at a time?

Now, let me say that it was not my preference, believe it or not, to launch my administration by passing the largest economic recovery plan in the Nation's history or to face crises in the financial market and the automobile industry. It was not ideal to take office in the midst of the worst job and growth numbers in decades, particularly since we're still in the midst of two wars. But that's the duty I signed on for.

And although my administration did not create these problems, it's now not only my responsibility, but my extraordinary privilege, to help solve them. It's my job to address every challenge that may threaten the strength and vitality of our families, our businesses, and our entire Nation, now and in the future.

We must move quickly and aggressively on the most immediate threats to our economy and financial stability: jobs, housing, and credit. There's no debate about that. And that's why we've already passed a recovery plan that will save and create 3.5 million jobs over the next 2 years, more than 90 percent of which will be located in the private sector, a plan that will also give 95 percent of working families a tax cut that begins by April 1st.

And that's why we've launched a housing plan that will help responsible families lower their monthly payments, a plan that's already helping responsible homeowners save money by refinancing their loans. And that's why we've forcefully attacked the credit lockdown that the help—that the housing crisis helped create.

As all of you know, credit is the lifeblood of a healthy economy. The inability of even creditworthy businesses and consumers to get loans today is a major roadblock to our recovery.

To help get credit flowing again, we've created an unprecedented lending fund in partnership with the Federal Reserve that will help support up to a trillion dollars in auto loans, college loans, and loans for the consumers and entrepreneurs who keep this economy running. We'll soon be announcing more efforts to provide even more lending to small businesses, which are being devastated by this credit crisis.

These are all important steps. But the only way we can truly unlock credit and heal our financial system for good is to address the state of our banking system. And I know that this crisis is at the top of your list of immediate concerns, and I promise you, it is at the top of mine as well.

We all know how we got here. A wave of complex and risky transactions around mortgages and other loans produced huge profits for financial institutions and those who run them until the housing bubble burst. And now some of the Nation's largest banks are holding so-called toxic assets, problematic debt that are dragging down the balance sheets of these institutions with no real market in which to sell them. And this has caused a slowdown in lending. And since finance today is global, the virus has spread worldwide.

Now, it's important to note that there are thousands of banks, large and small, that have made sound decisions and are on solid footing. And all Americans need to know that their deposits are secure. But the weakened condition of some of our largest banks has implications for the entire system, and those weaknesses must be addressed. And critical to that solution is an honest and forthright assessment of the true status of bank balance sheets, something that we've not yet had. And that's why the Treasury has asked bank regulators to conduct intensive examinations, or stress tests, of each bank.

When that process is complete next month, we will act decisively to ensure that our major banks have enough money on hand to lend to people even in more difficult times. And if we learn that such a bank has more serious problems, we will hold accountable those responsible, force the necessary adjustments, provide the support to clean up their balance sheets, and assure the continuity of a strong, viable institution that can serve our people and our economy. Now, I intend to hold these banks fully accountable for any assistance they'll receive, and this time they'll have to clearly demonstrate how taxpayer dollars result in more lending for the American taxpayer.

I also intend to enact tough, commonsense regulatory reforms, equal to the challenges of a 21st century financial system, so that a crisis like this never happens again. And when I meet with the leaders of the other G–20 nations next month, I'll ask them to join us in these actions, because in an age when financial transactions often cross borders, global coordination is essential to safeguard against future crises.

But the truth is that these problems in the financial market, as acute and urgent as they are, are only part of what threatens our economy. And we must not use the need to confront them as an excuse to keep ignoring the long-term threats to our prosperity: the cost of our health

care and our oil addiction, our education deficit and our fiscal deficit.

Now, I'm not choosing to address these additional challenges just because I feel like it or because I'm a glutton for punishment. I'm doing so because they're fundamental to our economic growth and ensuring that we don't have more crises like this in the future.

You see, we cannot go back to endless cycles of bubble and bust. We can't continue to base our economy on reckless speculation and spending beyond our means, on bad credit and inflated home prices and overleveraged banks. This crisis teaches us that such activity is not the creation of lasting wealth, it's the illusion of prosperity, and it hurts us all in the end.

Instead, we must build this recovery on a foundation that lasts, on a 21st century infrastructure and a green economy with lower health care costs that create millions of new jobs and new industries, on schools that prepare our children to compete and thrive, on businesses that are free to invest in the next big idea or breakthrough discovery.

We cannot wait to build this foundation. Putting off these investments for another 4 years or 8 years or 12 years or 20 years would be to continue the same irresponsibility that led us to this point. It would be exactly what Washington has done for decades, and it will make our recovery more fragile and our future less secure. And that's a future I don't accept, not for my children and not for yours. I did not come here to pass our problems on to the next President or the next generation; I'm here to solve them. I'm here to start building an economy and a prosperity that lasts.

Now, would I prefer to tackle these challenges without having inherited a trillion-dollar deficit or a financial crisis? Absolutely. But that's a choice that we don't have. I don't like the idea of spending more Government money, nor am I interested in expanding Government's role.

I've always been a strong believer in the power of the free market. It has been and will remain the very engine of America's progress, the source of a prosperity that has gone unmatched in human history. I believe that jobs are best created not by Government, but by businesses and entrepreneurs like you who are willing to take risks on a good idea. And I believe that our role as lawmakers is not to disparage wealth, but to expand its reach, not to stifle the market, but to strengthen its ability to unleash the creativity and innovation that still makes this Nation the envy of the world.

But I also know this: Throughout our history, there have been times when the market has fallen out of balance. There have been moments of economic transformation and upheaval when prosperity and even basic financial security have escaped far too many of our citizens. And at these moments, Government has stepped in not to supplant private enterprise, but to catalyze it, to create the conditions for thousands of entrepreneurs and new businesses to adapt and, ultimately, to thrive.

That's why we laid down railroads and highways to spur commerce and industry, to stitch this Nation together. That's why, even in the midst of civil war, Lincoln launched a transcontinental railroad and land-grant colleges and the National Academy of Sciences. That's why we initiated universal public high schools and passed a GI bill to nurture the skills and talents of all our workers. That's why Eisenhower built an Interstate Highway System and Kennedy pointed us to the moon, knowing that the exploration would lead to unimagined innovations here on Earth.

That's what we've done in the past, and that's why I've chosen to address education, health care, energy, and this budget, because we can't wait to make the investments today that will lead to tomorrow's prosperity. Now, as members of the Business Roundtable, you know how important this is when it comes to each one of these challenges.

On education, I know that you just heard from Arne Duncan. You've all long understood that the success of your business ultimately depends on its ability to hire workers who have the skills and knowledge to compete with other workers and other companies all over the world. You also know that America is increasingly falling behind in that competition. That's why it will be the goal of this administration to ensure that every child has access to a complete and competitive education from the

day they are born to the day they begin their career.

We've already dramatically expanded early childhood education, and we will continue to improve the quality of these programs. For as this organization knows, children who receive a quality early childhood education are more likely to attend college, more likely to hold a job, and more likely to earn more in that job.

This budget also creates new rewards tied to teacher performance and pathways for advancement and rewards for success for those teachers. And we're going to invest in innovative programs that are already helping schools meet high standards and close achievement gaps. We've urged States to lift the cap on the number of charter schools they build. And I've asked every American to commit to at least 1 year or more of higher education or career training, with the goal of having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by the next—by the year 2020.

And to meet that goal, we're investing $2.5 million to identify and support initiatives across the country that achieve results in helping students graduate. And we'll also make sure that a higher education is affordable for every American who wants to go.

Now, this budget also recognizes a reality that you understand as business leaders: In this economy, adults of all ages need opportunities to earn new degrees and skills. So we will work with our universities and community colleges to prepare workers for good jobs in high-growth industries and to improve access to job training not only for young people who are just starting their careers, but also for older workers who need new skills to change careers. That's how we'll create a workforce that will help our businesses compete and win in the 21st century. And that's how we'll create a workforce that is adaptable to a dynamic, global, capitalist system.

Even as we invest in our workers, we'll also need to create the jobs for them to fill. And that's why the second major investment that our budget makes is in the jobs and industries of the future. The recovery plan we passed will ultimately leverage at least $175 billion in private-sector investment, investment in areas like clean energy and small-business development and school construction.

This budget builds on that foundation by making historic investments in science and technology and infrastructure by making permanent the research and experimentation credit, by eliminating capital gains taxes for investments in small business and startups, and by providing the resources necessary to finally spark a clean energy revolution.

We all know that the country that harnesses the power of renewable energy will lead the 21st century. And yet, it's China that's launched the largest effort in history to make their economy energy efficient. We invented solar technology, but we've fallen behind countries like Germany and Japan in producing it. New plug-in hybrids will roll off our assembly lines, but they're running on battery cells made in Korea.

I do not accept a future where the jobs and industries of tomorrow take root beyond our borders, and I know you don't either. It's time for America to lead, and to do this, you and I both know that we need, ultimately, to make clean, renewable energy the profitable kind of energy. We know that the best way to do that is through market-based caps on carbon pollution that drives the production of more renewable energy in America.

I understand that this will be a difficult transition for many businesses to make, and that's why this budget does not account for such a cap until 2012, a time when this economy should be on the road to recovery. And to support this transition, we'll invest $15 billion a year to develop technologies like wind power and solar power, advanced biofuels, clean coal, and more fuel-efficient cars and trucks built right here in America.

Now, the last major challenge we address in this budget is a threat not only to the well-being of our families and the prosperity of our businesses, but to the very foundation of our economy, and that's the exploding cost of health care in America. And I know you had a session with Peter Orszag about this.

For those who believe that this issue is somehow unrelated to our economic crisis, consider the fact that up to 1.5 million Americans could lose their homes this year just because of

medical crises. And as everybody in this room is painfully aware, the same soaring costs that are straining our families' budgets are also sinking some of our best businesses or putting enormous strain on your bottom line.

Today, too many small businesses can't even think about insuring their employees, and major American corporations like yours are struggling to compete with foreign counterparts. Companies of all sizes are being forced to ship jobs overseas or shut their doors for good.

Medicare costs are consuming our Federal budget. Medicaid is overwhelming our State budgets. At the fiscal summit we held in the White House a few weeks ago, the one thing on which everyone agreed was that the greatest threat to America's fiscal health is not the investments we've made to rescue our economy, it's the skyrocketing costs of our health care system.

You understand this. For years, the Business Roundtable has worked tirelessly to promote investments in electronic medical records, with strict privacy standards, that will help save money and lives, investments that we have now made in the recovery plan. You participated in last week's White House Forum on Health Reform, proving that this time we find business and labor, medical professionals and patient advocates all on the side—same side of the issue, urging meaningful reform. And you were one of the many organizations that urged us to include health care in this budget, which is why we've made a historic commitment to reform based on the principle that we must bring down crushing costs and provide quality, affordable health care to every American. It's a commitment that's paid for in part by efficiencies in the system that are long overdue, and we will need your help to ensure that it is included in the final budget.

Let me just give you one example: Medicare. For years we've been paying Medicare Advantage Plans 14 percent more than it would cost for the traditional Medicare plan. In this budget, we have a simple idea. Instead of Government setting prices for our seniors, why not have private plans bid for Medicare's business? This competitive bidding is good for businesses, it's good for our seniors, and it's good for taxpayers, because it saves us $177 billion over 10 years.

We've undertaken an unprecedented effort to find savings just like this in every corner of this budget, because with the deficit we inherited, the cost of the recession we face, and the long-term challenges we have to meet, it's never been more important to ensure that as our economy recovers, we do what it takes to cut this deficit in half by the end of my first term in office.

Now, I know that some have questioned this commitment, and I want you to know that I understand the skepticism, because we've heard promises like this before. And it's true that this crisis has compelled us to add to our deficit in the short term. But I ask all of you to look at this budget. Already, we've identified $2 trillion in deficit reductions over the next decade. We've announced procurement reform that will save the Government $40 billion by greatly reducing no-bid contracts. We're going to end education programs that don't work. We will eliminate direct payments to agribusiness that don't need them. We'll root out even more waste, fraud, and abuse in our Medicare program.

So altogether, this budget cuts spending by $1 trillion over the next decade, $1 trillion from where it would be if we just kept on going on our current path. And that will reduce discretionary spending for domestic programs as a share of the economy by more than 10 percent over the next decade. It will be at the lowest level in nearly half a century, lowest level in nearly half a century.

Now, if we wanted to, we could have painted a sunnier fiscal picture in this budget. We could have relied on some of the same gimmicks that our Government has used for the last 8 years, gimmicks that would hide spending on things like Iraq and Afghanistan, gimmicks like assuming that there's never a natural disaster anywhere in the country over the course of a year. Our deficit would appear $2.7 trillion better—had we used those gimmicks—over the next decade.

But I told my team we're not going to do that. We're not just suffering from a deficit of

dollars in this Government, we're suffering from a deficit of trust. And I believe that restoring that trust begins by restoring a sense of honesty and accountability to our budget.

Now, while we're being honest, let's also talk about taxes, always a favorite subject. I said in my address to Congress that this is the one issue that always falls victim to the same political scare tactics we've seen for decades. So let me be very clear: If this budget is passed, not one American will see their taxes raised a single dime between now and the end of 2010. All right, so for the next 2 years, your taxes aren't going up—nobody. At that point, at the end of 2010, 97 percent of all taxpayers and 97 percent of all small businesses will still not see a tax increase—97 percent. In fact, 95 percent of all working families will receive a tax cut, so they can buy some of the wonderful products that you make.

For the top 3 percent of all taxpayers—and I'm just going to take a shot in the dark and guess that that includes some of the people in this room—the top tax rate across the board will still be lower than they were during the prosperity of the 1990s. It will still be lower than they were during the Clinton era. You will pay a tax rate on capital gains and dividends that is also lower than it was during most of the 1990s. And the revenue that results from these changes will reduce the deficit by $750 billion over the next 10 years.

Now, there's no doubt that we've had to make some tough choices in this budget, and we're likely to have to make more in the days and months ahead. And you and I won't always agree on every decision or every issue, but I do believe that we know what needs to be done to build an economy that's not just revived from a crisis, but rebuilt for the future, to secure a prosperity that no longer rests on a bubble, but on a firm foundation that will make this country strong and competitive in the 21st century.

That kind of economy, an economy with workers who are highly skilled and highly educated, with a health care system that is efficient and affordable, with energy that is clean and renewable, with entrepreneurs who are free to invest in the next big idea, that's an economy that's built to last. That's a future that's good for business. And this is a country that will lead and prosper for generations to come.

And I look forward to your continued cooperation in building that country, because I have absolute faith that we can get there together. So thank you very much.

So I asked my team for some extra time to make sure that I was able to answer as many questions as possible.

Mr. Chairman of the Roundtable, do you want to start us off?

Private Sector-Federal Government Partnership/Financial Regulatory Reform

Harold McGraw III. I do, thank you very much. And, Mr. President, we really appreciate you taking time to be with us and to give us access to so much of your team throughout the day.

The business community is committed to be a part of the solution. And those millions of jobs that you talked about, you know, largely, as you say, are coming from businesses. And therefore, we want to partner with you in terms of, one, ending this economic crisis, increasing liquidity, and getting smart regulation. And we're with you and Secretary Duncan on the education agenda, workforce development, personnel training, vocational training. We're for affordable and quality health care costs and access to that for everyone.

We certainly want to be able to create that energy independence that you've talked about. And we want to be in a position where we can have the kind of investment in our community by keeping our markets open and having access to markets all around.

So we're committed to being able to do all that and working with you.

During the campaign you talked often about having an open administration, and you were going to push very, very hard for that. There's a misperception, I think, in some people's minds that the relationship between business and the Obama administration is like, well, oil and vinegar in that way. Well, I would like to tell you that, from our standpoint, that couldn't be farther from the truth. Everybody in this room is anxious to see you succeed and wants to be a part of that.

In that end, you know, we have the same common goals right now—jobs, growth, recovery, competitiveness—and as such the ask that I would have for you is that if you would allow us to set up a regular schedule such that the expertise of the chief executives here could work with whoever you designate to be a sounding board, pushing back and helping to form those kinds of opinions.

And thank you again for coming.

The President. Absolutely. Well, look, that's exactly the kind of partnership that we seek. As I said, there are actually a lot of people in this room who our team has consulted with on a regular basis, and we hope to do more of that in the future.

And I know that, you know, John has attended a number of the summits that we've been putting in place. I think you will find that this is actually an administration that also wants you to succeed in the same way that you want us to succeed. As I said before, I am a strong believer in the ability of the free market to generate wealth and prosperity that's shared across the board. I think there are times where sometimes our economy gets out of balance. This is obviously one of those times. And so Government has to intervene in a crisis. But the goals should always be to right the ship and let private enterprise do its magic.

There are going to be a series of fairly complex issues around regulation in the financial markets, which we believe is necessary. I think we've got to—and I assume that many of the people here agree that we've got to update the regulatory framework that was created in the thirties for global markets where trillions of dollars are spinning around the globe with the press of a button. But we are also very mindful that we've got to do those regulatory reforms in a way that doesn't strangle innovation and creativity and entrepreneurship, but deals with the systemic risks that, obviously, we were unprepared to deal with when this latest crisis occurred.

With respect to a tax policy, again, we want to consult with you, because our belief is that we've got to have a stable system that closes the structural deficit that right now is built into the Federal Government. And it's an unsustainable deficit. If we keep on going down this path, at some point, folks who've been financing our ways are going to say, "Enough. We don't want to buy anymore T-bills." And then we've got some problems.

So we're going to work with you on that. We want to do it in a way that encourages work, encourages investment, encourages savings, and makes sure that we're financing what we need out of Government, but no more than what we need.

So on a whole host of these issues, we are going to be actively soliciting your advice and your input. And our expectation is that we can use this moment to create a stronger free market system; one that's more stable, one that's more profitable over the long term. But I think as everybody here recognizes, because you're all thinking about it with respect to your own businesses, this is going to take some time. I mean, we were engaging in a unsustainable model for a very long time, and the bill is now due for a lot of bad habits and bad practices that were built up over the course of many years.

It is complicated, and it is international. And so our focus right now is to stabilize the financial system, get credit flowing again, to project a budget that allows in future years for us to start tackling these very big problems. But we've got to get started now if we're actually going to get there on health care, on energy, and education. And that's what we're trying to accomplish.

Good. Let's see—Sam.

Corporate Taxes and Deferrals

Samuel J. Palmisano. Thank you, Mr. President. Well, first of all, we're very encouraged——

The President. Here, they—we got a mike right behind you.

Mr. Palmisano. On behalf of everyone in the business community, we're very, very encouraged with your words and your support. You've always said that you were committed to the competitiveness of American business. You've always said that you're committed to the competitiveness of our country, and we really appreciate it. Yes, we are in tough times.

I also want to thank you for all the support in the stimulus package. And when we met, you listened to us and you implemented many of our ideas, and your leadership made a difference. So, again, we appreciate it.

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Palmisano. There's one thing that I'd like to mention in that construct of working together and your reaching out, and that is this: how tax structures are used around the world for economic development. All of our trading partners have done this for many, many years; that's part of their industrial policy, we all understand that. You've argued for a fair playing field; we appreciate that.

But what's happened in the past is that there was a thing called the deferral. And the deferral was put in place to normalize all these anomalies. They're all different; they're not the same, so it was put in place for that purpose. So it was a normalization to help American competitiveness.

As you know, in the current proposed budget, there's a consideration around the deferral. We all accept we need to deal with the deficit. I mean, nobody in this room is going to argue we want big deficits. They hurt business, as you know; they squeeze capital out of the private sector. But at the same time, the deferral has been very, very important to this normalization, and it allowed us to compete. So what we really are just asking for, and we mentioned this to Tim earlier today, is just an open dialog to engage, to give you all the facts that we know, why it's so important to us, so just to kind of reach out and take you up on your offer to listen to our point of view.

The President. Absolutely. Good. I will certainly listen to your point of view, because I want American businesses to be competitive. And by the way, at some point—this isn't reflected in our current budget, because we've already got a lot on our plate—but my interest over time in potentially lowering corporate rates in exchange for closing a lot of the loopholes that make the tax system so complex, that's a very appealing conversation to me, and I'd like to pursue it.

With respect to the specific issue of the deferrals, look, it is difficult for, I think, the average American, if they feel as if businesses investing here are paying a higher tax rate than if they're investing overseas. It's just counterintuitive. I think people generally feel like let's encourage and motivate corporations to invest here at home, particularly at a time when there's been significant job loss.

I'm appreciative of the fact that if you are a multinational operation, that you've got all sorts of tax rates that create a lot of headaches and you don't want to end up double-paying where you can help it. So some of this stuff gets pretty technical; let's make sure that you and others, representatives of the Business Roundtable, are working with Treasury to find out if we can find that right balance. I want you to be competitive. I don't want you to be placed at a competitive disadvantage with other countries—or companies from other countries. We also want to make sure that not just from a revenue perspective, but also from the perspective of job creation here at home, that we've got a Tax Code that reflects those values. Okay? Good.

Anne—where's Anne? There you are. Good. I've got a little list. [*Laughter*]

Upcoming G–20 Meeting

Anne M. Mulcahy. Great. Mr. President, thanks for engaging with us this afternoon; it's actually been a very productive day.

You know, on that theme of global companies—and I think lots of us are witnessing further deterioration around the world, and it's worrying, in terms of the business community.

In a few weeks, you're going to meet with G–20 leaders, and an ability to coordinate, to have a set of actions that really are aligned, I think, is important for the health of the world right now.

What's your—what are your expectations, and how feasible is it to have an aligned agenda?

The President. Well, I actually think that it's very feasible. We're actively pursuing it. And I'm having meetings and conversations ahead of the G–20. I already had a meeting with Gordon Brown. I'll be meeting with people like Kevin Rudd from Australia. I met with the Chinese Foreign Minister today in preparations for meeting with President Hu in London, when we get—when we arrive.

I think there are a couple of broad principles that we'd like to see emerging out of the G–20; number one, that the stimulus efforts of all countries are sufficiently robust to deal with the decline in demand. We think that's important. And countries like China, for example, are doing that, and we want to make sure that everybody is mindful that the decline in global demand is enormous and now is the time for us to provide some ballast.

Number two, financial regulation—we think that it's very important that there is coordination, not necessarily a supraregulator, but that there is coordination and effort so that if we are doing some things that are increasing transparency, openness, trust in—on Wall Street, that London is doing the same thing and that other financial markets are doing the same thing, so that we don't start seeing a race to the bottom, but rather we see a race to the top, where we've got a stable global financial system.

A third thing that we have to pay attention to is the situation in emerging markets. We've got some very big problems potentially there. And that is something that the Europeans, for example, should be very interested in, because their banks have enormous exposure to those countries. We've got to pay a lot of attention to it, not only for economic reasons but also for national security reasons.

I mean, if you start seeing a lot of emerging markets collapse, it's bad for business, but it also creates a dangerous international environment. So to that end, the idea of wealthier countries or countries that are running surpluses, have decent foreign reserves, foreign currency reserves, being able to work with the international financial institutions to provide some help in propping up those economies as we climb out of this recession, I think, is going to be very important.

And I just want to make sure that I'm—I'm doing this off the top of my head. The last thing, I think, that we have to pay some attention to is making sure that we're not dropping back into protectionism. I mean, I think everybody understands sort of the history of the Great Depression. So far at least, we're seeing some movement to contain protectionist sentiments in these various domestic markets, but we have to build on that, and I think, having a strong statement that encourages trade and making sure that there are sufficient credit lines for trade, because that's one of the big problems that we've seen right now in terms of world trade is, it's just very hard to—the traditional mechanisms for lending that facilitate trade have really contracted.

So those are all areas that we've got to spend a lot of time focused on. I'm confident, actually, that interests will be aligned here more than they have been in the past. Okay?

Let's see. How about Bill Green? Bill is over here. Do we have a mike?

Education Reform/Trade/Innovation

William D. Green. Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you also for your comments on education over the last several days. It gave us a lot of clarity, and Secretary Duncan did a terrific job of—I think it's one thing that we're very much aligned on because we realize that a competitive country needs competitive companies and in order to do that we have to have a competitive workforce.

There is something that I think it's important that you know. We are launching tomorrow the Springboard Project, which is organized by the Business Roundtable. And what it's focused on, really, is sort of three charges.

The first one is about making sure the education system produces the skills that we need for today's and tomorrow's markets. The second thing is we need to institutionalize lifelong learning. It's absolutely true, we can see that all now, and it needs to be an individual and a collective imperative for our country. And I think all of our citizens and all of our workforce needs to understand that. And the third is, for a problem that's here and now, is we need to facilitate workers in gaining new skills that have been displaced by economic dislocation and other changes in the market, which are going to be a natural occurrence over time. And we need to work forward on that. So we're just looking forward to working closely with your team to make sure we can tackle those. Thank you.

The President. I look forward to that. And you're exactly right that we are going to continue to be the most dynamic economy in the world. And one of our strengths is our dynamism, the fact that we adapt quickly. We got risk takers in this country. That means that sometimes we have higher failure rates, but it also means that we've got greater flexibility and we pursue opportunity.

That is part of the American character that we want to retain. And so I'm amused sometimes when I read, sort of, this talk of, well, you know, "The Obama administration wants to get Government in everybody's business." I don't. I want you guys to do your thing.

What is true, though, is that in the current global, highly competitive environment that the burdens and benefits, the dislocations of that dynamism are disproportionately borne by workers in certain sectors, in certain regions. And that creates great pain, it creates great hardship. And so part of what we want to figure out is how do we make sure that the burdens and benefits of this dynamic economy are spread in a way that maintains strong political and social support for that dynamism.

And so for those of you who are concerned about protectionism, the best way to ensure that we're not seeing protectionist tendencies in this country is to make sure that workers are benefiting from trade. And some sectors are, but some sectors may not be. If we are retraining them, if we're investing in their futures, if, when there are new opportunities in green energy companies are saying, "You know what, let's go to Michigan, or let's go to Ohio"—where you've seen a huge exodus of jobs—"let's go in there and work on developing the new battery or the new solar panel or the new technology that is going to help launch new industries." Now, that is going to be something that I think benefits everybody and benefits your businesses most of all.

So I'm excited about the prospect. That's part of what we've already done in our recovery package, in the recovery and reinvestment package.

Carol is going to be talking to you about some of the stuff we're doing on energy. We've got to train people. Something like the smart grid, which could create huge efficiencies for your businesses as well as individual families, there are a bunch of bottlenecks. Some of it has to do with local siting issues, but some of it just has to do with the fact that finding enough trained electricians to lay these lines. Right now we don't have enough, at a time when we've got huge unemployment out there.

And so figuring out how we're training people for the right jobs, that requires consultation with business. You guys can help us identify what are the particular skill sets that people are going to need so that working with community colleges, universities, vocational programs, apprenticeship programs, we are teeing that up.

Okay. Is Ivan here? Go ahead.

Health Care Reform/Federal Budget

Ivan G. Seidenberg. Mr. President, how are you?

The President. I'm doing well, thank you.

Mr. Seidenberg. Okay, good. And again, on behalf of all of us, thank you so much for being with us today and the energy you're putting into all these issues. It's really encouraging. Health care—your comments on health care were terrific and very enlightening. I think we're all pretty much focused and agree that the costs of health care are way out of line and we need to do something to bring them in line.

We at the BRT have been working on a model, working on a framework to how we move ahead with reform. I'd just like to point out a couple of things to you to get your reaction to it.

We agree that the goal is to not only broaden access, but to lower the cost and improve the quality for everybody. So we start with employer-based health care. We think today most people get health care from their business; a hundred and eighty million Americans do. We can provide not only the current need for their families, but also create the kind of incentives for future well-being and make sure they have good behaviors and deal with all of the kinds of things that create healthy employees, not just today, but for a long time. We can work with the insurance carriers to provide the robust policies and plans that will be out in the marketplace. So it's really important that we start with that framework.

Second thing is to make sure that we have some individual participation. I think it's very important that we don't have a Government plan competing with a private plan and finding out that our employees or the citizens in general could go to a plan that doesn't have the same incentives and requirements and behavioral characteristics to make sure that they do the right things long term.

I think the last thing is the thing that you've mentioned with respect to health IT. There are at least two or three dozen things we can do right now that begin driving costs out. I think the initiative that you approved on health IT is terrific. The quicker we get the systems built and the data collected, we can start changing the system. But we could do more. We could do more with medical reform—medical liability reform. We could do more with, in effect, Medicare and review the—and change the payment systems.

So I think health care reform really is the devil is in the details. And I think if we get the model working correctly, we could make a significant impact on the things that you've articulated today. Thank you.

The President. Absolutely. I think you make a couple of terrific points, so let me just amplify a few. Number one, I think we have a moral obligation to make sure that in a country this wealthy you don't have single moms not able to send their kids to a doctor because they just can't afford it and they don't have insurance on their job.

So I think there's a powerful moral element to health care. I get 10 letters sent to me out of the 40,000 that are sent to me every day to read every night, just so that I'm attuned to what's happening outside my bubble; although somebody pointed out the other day, it's a very nice bubble, but it is a bubble. [*Laughter*] And I would say at least half of them in some ways relate to a individual family crisis with health care; and they're heartbreaking. It has to be dealt with.

But having said that, I also just have a very hard-headed analysis about this, which is the path we're on is unsustainable. If you have 6, 8, 10 percent health care inflation every single year, at some point we are all broke. Businesses are broke or you stop providing health care to your employees. The Federal Government is way broke with Medicare and Medicaid. State governments are groaning under the weight of this stuff. It's consuming everything.

So what that also means though—and this is something I've tried to emphasize to my more progressive friends—we can't simply just add on a whole bunch of people to a broken system, because that's also unsustainable. I mean, we—you can't just take people who are currently uninsured, plop them on to a system that is generating those kinds of costs, not dig into the engine and try to figure out how to make the thing run more efficiently, because then you'll just be broke that much faster. And at some point, you start making very draconian decisions about people losing benefits.

So the cost issue is the thing that we actually think is the big driver in this whole debate. And that's why—I know you heard from Peter Orszag—things like comparative effectiveness, health IT, prevention, figuring out how our reimbursement structures are designed under Medicare and Medicaid, medical liability issues, I mean, I think all those things have to be on the table. And I won't lie to you that everybody agrees on this theoretically, until you start getting to the specifics. And oftentimes though, Ivan, one of the things I'll note is the resistance is not based on evidence, it's based on people's interests. Everybody is kind of dug in. They know that the system doesn't work, but at least it kind of works for them in one particular aspect.

And part of the reason that we did not simply design our own plan and try to jam it down the throats of Congress is we want them to see some of the contradictions in their own positions and, over time, sort through some of those tensions, make some tough choices, working with us. But we think that we've got to get this done now; this is a window.

Not everything is going to be implemented now. And this, by the way, goes to a broader issue with respect to our budget. Because I think there's some people, when we issued the budget, they said, "Boy, these Obama people, they're really ambitious. They're taking on health care; they're taking on energy; they're

taking on education. Don't they know that there's this bank crisis right now? We've got to do one thing at a time."

Look, the budget document that we put forward is a 10-year document. We are like any organization; just like all of yours, we have to do long-term planning even as we're addressing short-term issues. If we don't do the long-term planning, then we end up having more short-term issues again and again and again and again.

So we don't anticipate that every piece of health care is done this year. We think that we've got to get the process and get in place a structure and a framework and a funding approach and work out a lot of these details. But it's going to be implemented over time. We're not going to have instant health IT all next year. The same is true on the energy front. Under the cap proposal that we have it wouldn't even start until 2012, where we're going to be out of this recession, or you'll have somebody else speaking to you in 2013. [*Laughter*]

But if we don't start now, if we wait until—to have the debate in 2012, and then suddenly it turns out that oil is at 150 a barrel again, and we say, oh, why is it that we didn't start thinking about this and making some steps now to figure this out? Well, that's what Washington does. You guys could not run your business that way. And so the notion that we are doing some long-term planning now and trying to get this town to think long term, that somehow that's a distraction, just defies every sound management practice that I've ever heard of.

And so we've got some immediate stuff that we've got to deal with right now. What this budget does is it reflects a vision about where we need to go, and I think it's the right vision.

All right, let me see how I'm doing on time. I've got a little more time. I'm going to take at least a couple more questions. Dan Fulton. Is Dan around? Yes, sir. Go ahead.

Carbon Allowance Auctions/Carbon Cap-and-Trade System

Daniel S. Fulton. Thank you for your leadership.

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Fulton. My company, Weyerhaeuser, is committed to addressing climate change, and we've adopted significant emission reduction goals, and we support legislation to establish a cap-and-trade approach to climate change. In your comments you've expressed support for a cap for—with a 100-percent auction of carbon allowances to generate revenue for the Government. In your comments earlier today you also talked about an implementation timeframe of 2012.

I just wanted to comment that a number of us in the business community are concerned that a 100-percent auction will effectively be a tax that would impose significant costs on energy-intensive industries such as some that we operate and may impact existing industries' ability to fund needed investments in no—new low-carbon technologies.

I just wondered if you could explain how the 100-percent auction approach would work in our highly challenged economy, because we're all feeling a lot of pressure today on costs, and yet still preserve jobs for existing industries and strengthen our existing manufacturing sector.

The President. Good. Well, let me start by saying this. I said during the campaign we were looking at a 100-percent auction. We are not going to be able to move this in an effective way without partnership with the business community. No, we just—we can't get it done. And for businesses like yours that are committed to the concept and the idea, we're going to work to make sure that it works for you.

Now, the experience of a cap-and-trade system thus far is that if you're giving away carbon permits for free, then basically you're not really pricing the thing, and it doesn't work, or people can game the system in so many ways that it's not creating the incentive structures that we're looking for. The flip side is, you're right, if it's so onerous that people can't meet it, then it defeats the purpose, and politically, we can't get it done anyway.

So we're going to have to find a structure that arrives at that right balance. We want to create a price structure. Keep in mind that the reason that I'm interested in a cap-and-trade approach is precisely because I think the market makes decisions about these technologies better than

we do. You know, for those who are concerned about some heavy-handed, command-and-control regulations coming down the pike, cap and trade is designed to say, you know what, here's a target, here's a price, you guys go figure it out, and if you can make money on it, all the better.

So that's the—that's our goal. That's what we want. And how that pricing mechanism works most effectively to actually influence incentives, but also be sufficiently realistic that industries are thriving as opposed to groaning under the weight of it, I think, is going to be the trick. I'm confident that we can do it. We've done it before.

I mean, keep in mind that when—I'm trying to remember, is—this was back in the seventies or early eighties—I'm getting old enough now where I can't remember—but, you know, the issue of acid rain was around. Everybody thought all your trees were going to be dying; you couldn't make any paper. And we put in an auction system and a trading mechanism and, lo and behold, American ingenuity and American entrepreneurship and inventiveness created options that ended up being much cheaper than anybody had imagined, much cheaper than anybody had imagined.

Now, in the meantime, I just—I was talking to some Members of Congress just yesterday, you know, who were concerned about this, because I'm sure they're hearing from industries and, you know, what does this mean economically, et cetera. I just want to point out, you know—anybody who has been to Las Vegas recently and looked at Lake Mead, or who is familiar with what's happening in agriculture in California right now, or go down to Atlanta, which may not have any water soon, because of what's happening in terms of changing weather patterns, or talk to Kevin Rudd in Australia, that's going to cost us money too. It's just not—it's not priced.

And I'm not somebody who—I've never bought into these Malthusian woe, Chicken Little, the Earth is falling. I tend to be pretty optimistic. I wouldn't be here if I weren't pretty optimistic. But I think this is—the science is overwhelming. This is a real problem. It will have severe economic consequences, as well as political and national security and environmental consequences.

And I'm confident that if we do it smart, if we're talking to you guys, if we're talking to industries, if our projections don't end up being wildly unrealistic, that I think we can handle this problem.

All right. Okay, let me make this the last question.

Dick.

National Economy/Financial Regulatory Reform

Richard D. Parsons. First I'd like to say, it's good to see you.

The President. Good to see you. Here, we got a mike coming up. I think those are turned down right now.

Mr. Parsons. As you know, Secretary Geithner was here earlier today and, I thought, did a terrific job. And as he went through his hastily prepared—but prepared—remarks, I made a little tick mark every time he used the word "confidence" or talked about restoring confidence, until I ran out of ink. I say that somewhat facetiously, but I think he's spot on. I think he's spot on.

We're in a battle in this country now, and maybe in the world, where—between confidence and fear. And it's important that confidence win, because if consumers are confident, they'll spend; and if they're fearful, they won't. If investors are confident, they'll invest; and if they're fearful, they won't. And all the money of all the governments in the world can't replace that, right?

The President. Right.

Mr. Parsons. So I take it down to our industry, the banking business. At its core, it's a very simple business. It takes funds from depositors and other providers of funding, and then it makes that—those funds available in the credit markets. And that's how businesses grow, when people buy homes and send their kids to college, buy cars, and all that sort of stuff.

The President. Can I just say, Dick, it hasn't been that simple lately. [*Laughter*] But in—I get your theory though.

Mr. Parsons. I said at its core.

The President. All right, I'll talk to Jamie. Maybe that's—[*laughter*].

Mr. Parsons. Some folks got carried away, I'll acknowledge that. But the core business is essential to restoring this economy to full vitality. And one of the things the Secretary said was that—he laid out a 4-point program, and he said at the end of the day, though, we're committed to—particularly for those institutions that are core to the financial system—to providing support, so that those essential funders—depositors, bond holders, people who participate in the debt markets—can have confidence that they'll be protected.

I think if those fundamental funders do have confidence, do believe that we're protected in all of this, our money is going to—they will help stabilize the banking system, and then what you talked about earlier will happen—the credit cycle will begin, and then the country and the economy can begin to heal.

I just wondered, does your—among other chiefs, you're the confidence-builder-in-chief—I wondered if you could either elaborate or drive home that point that the Secretary made, because I think it will help us all.

The President. Well, look, this is the most dynamic economy on Earth, and our capacity is undiminished. We've got the same smart folks, and engineers and scientists. We've still got the hardest working workers on Earth. We've got the best universities. We've got all kinds of innovations. And you know what? We've also got a whole bunch of potential customers out there. As bad as the housing market has been, you're starting to see inventories decline.

And there's a young family out there right now who's going to be thinking about buying a home. And if we can get them credit, they're going to buy that home. And if they buy that home, then that construction worker, maybe he comes in and remodels the kitchen. And that means that he can buy the computer for his kid at school. And we're off to the races.

So I am very confident about our long-term prospects. We live in such a rapid-fire, information-rich environment that people's attention spans go like this. And that makes for volatility in confidence. A smidgen of good news and suddenly everything is doing great. A little bit of bad news, oh, we're down in the dumps. And I am obviously an object of this constantly varying assessment. [*Laughter*] I'm the object-in-chief of this varying assessment. [*Laughter*]

So my view—you know, people ask me sometimes, "Well, you seem like a pretty calm guy. How do you do that?" I say, "Well, look, I don't think things are ever as good as we say, and they're never as bad as they say." And things 2 years ago were not as good as we thought because there were a lot of underlying weaknesses in the economy, and they're not as bad as we think they are now.

We're going to restore confidence by, in a very systematic way, getting this financial system fixed. I think Secretary Geithner and Chairman Bernanke and Sheila Bair have done an extraordinary job; it hasn't gotten a lot of fanfare, but the TALF program that's been put in place, the creation of markets once again for some of these securities that are out there so that they can be priced and we can start seeing financing flowing again, the fact that for all the, you know, angst that's been out there, you've got banking institutions that are still functioning and, lo and behold, making profits.

We still have some big problems in the banking industry. That's what these stress tests are about. We are going to make a effective assessment and, even with the worst case scenarios, we're still going to be looking at the vast majority of banks are going to be doing fine and in a position to make profits. Even with the worst case scenarios, even if things stay bad for awhile, the vast majority of these banks are going to be fine.

By the way, depositors are all going to be fine. That's why we've got the FDIC. And so I think Americans understand that their deposits are going to be fine.

The market is going to be responding to all this information out there and, you know, the whole issue of animal spirits in the marketplace and when suddenly a rally catches, you know, you guys know that better than I do. But my focus has to be on the long term. And my long-term projections are highly optimistic, if we take care of some of these long-term structural problems.

The one thing I don't want to do is to replicate the false confidence that was premised on bubbles. And I think that we've really got to think through—and all of you, as critical captains of industry, have to help us think through—how do we prevent this froth that builds up and go back to steady growth, fundamental growth that's based on making things, providing good services, innovating, exporting, as opposed to just borrowing and leveraging? And that is going to be a challenge, and there's going to be some adjustment.

But even with consumers—I mean, we've got this interesting situation where we're actually seeing consumers do exactly what we would have liked them to do, just not all at once, and that's starting to save some, right? Paying down credit card bills, making sure that they've socked away a little bit each month for their retirement, for their kids' college education, that, ultimately, is a positive thing.

We just want to make sure that everybody understands, you know what, you don't have to stop in your tracks here. Things are going to get better. It's going to require some patience. And the one thing that I think our country and our culture will benefit from is an end to short-term gratification and a recognition that, ultimately, you build up value by hard work and dedication and sweat, and there are going to be some bumps in the road and things take time.

But I'm very confident about it, and I hope you are too.

Thank you, everybody. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:03 p.m. at the St. Regis Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Education Arne Duncan; Peter R. Orszag, Director, Office of Management and Budget; Harold McGraw III, chairman, president, and chief executive officer, The McGraw-Hill Companies; John J. Castellani, president, Business Roundtable; Samuel J. Palmisano, chairman of the board and chief executive officer, IBM Corp.; Anne M. Mulcahy, chairman and chief executive officer, Xerox Corp.; Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Kevin M. Rudd of Australia; Minister of Foreign Affairs Yang Jiechi and President Hu Jintao of China; William D. Green, chairman and chief executive officer, Accenture; Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change Carol M. Browner; Ivan G. Seidenberg, chairman and chief executive officer, Verizon Communications; Daniel S. Fulton, president and chief executive officer, Weyerhaeuser Co.; and Richard D. Parsons, chairman of the board of directors, Citigroup, Inc.; James L. Dimon, chairman of the board of directors and chief executive officer, JPMorgan Chase & Co.; and Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board Chairman Paul A. Volcker and an Exchange With Reporters
March 13, 2009

The President. Well, listen, I just had a meeting with Paul Volcker and our business advisory board to discuss a wide range of issues, but with some particular focus on the financial markets. And the thing I want to emphasize is that we are spending every day working through how to get credit flowing again so that businesses, large and small, as well as consumers, are able to obtain credit, and we can get this economy moving again.

As I've said before, that's one of the legs of the stool in rebuilding the economy; the first one, a stimulus package that is going to be hitting the ground and putting people back to work. The second part of this is making sure that not just the banking system, but also the credit system as a whole, is functioning and that we fix some of the plumbing there. We're going to have to do some long-term financial regulatory work, and Mr. Volcker has a range of ideas on that. But that's something that we have to do very carefully. How do we eliminate systemic risks so that this kind of problem never happens again? And finally, we've got to do

some coordination with other countries in order to assure that what we do here in the United States corresponds with strong efforts overseas.

The last point that I'd make—and I made this point to the Business Roundtable yesterday—it is very important, even as we're focused on the financial system and the credit markets, that we are laying the foundation for what I'm calling a post-bubble economic growth plan. The days when we are going to be able to grow this economy just on an overheated housing market or people spending—maxing out on their credit cards, those days are over. What we need to do is go back to fundamentals, and that means driving our health care costs down. It means improving our education system so our children are prepared and we're innovating in science and technology. And it means that we're making this transition to the clean energy economy. Those are the priorities reflected in our budget, and that is part and parcel with the short-term steps that we're taking to make sure that the economy gets back on its feet.

So I am very grateful to Paul for his ongoing advice and counsel to the other members of the business community who participated, and we're going to be doing a lot of outreach and working with them consistently in the weeks and months to come.

Paul, anything to add?

Chairman Volcker. Well, let me just say, you all know this is a very complicated matter, just in the financial system, and you've been talking to us, talking to others, and concentrating on that. And I'm sure some program will be developed.

But there are big economic problems behind the financial system too. They're going to take longer to work out. And you've got those problems while we're working on this immediate crisis, continuing crisis in the financial system.

The President. Thanks. Okay, guys, thank you. Have a great weekend.

National Economy

Q. Mr. President, Mr. Summers says Americans have an excess of fear. Can you elaborate on that?

The President. Well, I think, as I said to the Business Roundtable, our capacity is undiminished. We have the most productive workers on Earth. We've got some of the most innovative businesses on Earth. We've got the greatest universities, incredible infrastructure, and we've got the most dynamic free market economy on Earth.

We've got some significant problems that have been built up over a long period of time. There was a lot of over-leveraging that was taking place in the financial system. But the bottom line is, is that those businesses that were creating outstanding products and services 2 years ago, they are still creating outstanding products and services. And those workers who were getting up every day and doing outstanding work, they've still got an incredible desire to work hard and grow this economy and do right by their families.

So what we need to do is to make sure that we're putting in the pillars economically to deal with the short-term emergency, to stabilize the economy, and to put in the foundation for long-term economic growth. That's a overarching package that, I think, the American people are hungry for. They feel confident about America. The business executives I met with yesterday are confident about our ability to grow long term. We've got to get through this difficult period.

And, look, there are a lot of individual families who are increase—experiencing incredible pain and hardship right now. If you've been laid off your job, if you've lost your home, then, you know, right now is very tough. But we're providing help along the way. That's why we put a housing program in place; that's why we're going to be announcing additional steps to help small businesses.

But if we are keeping focused on all the fundamentally sound aspects of our economy, all the outstanding companies, workers, all the innovation and dynamism in this economy, then we're going to get through this. And I'm very confident about that.

All right? Thank you, guys. Appreciate it. Have a good weekend.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:31 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A reporter referred to Lawrence H. Summers, Director, National Economic Council.

The President's Weekly Address
March 14, 2009

I've often said that I don't believe government has the answer to every problem or that it can do all things for all people. We are a nation built on the strength of individual initiative. But there are certain things that we can't do on our own. There are certain things only government can do. And one of those things is ensuring that the foods we eat and the medicines we take are safe and don't cause us harm. That's the mission of our Food and Drug Administration, and it is a mission shared by our Department of Agriculture and a variety of other agencies and offices at just about every level of government.

The men and women who inspect our foods and test the safety of our medicines are chemists and physicians, veterinarians and pharmacists. It's because of the work they do each and every day that the United States is one of the safest places in the world to buy groceries at a supermarket or pills at a drugstore. Unlike citizens of so many other countries, Americans can trust that there is a strong system in place to ensure that the medications we give our children will help them get better, not make them sick, and that a family dinner won't end in a trip to the doctor's office.

But in recent years, we've seen a number of problems with the food making its way to our kitchen tables. In 2006, it was contaminated spinach. In 2008, it was Salmonella in peppers and possibly tomatoes. And just this year, bad peanut products led to hundreds of illnesses and cost nine people their lives, a painful reminder of how tragic the consequences can be when food producers act irresponsibly and Government is unable to do its job. Worse, these incidents reflect a troubling trend that's seen the average number of outbreaks from contaminated produce and other foods grow to nearly 350 a year, up from 100 a year in the early 1990s.

Part of the reason is that many of the laws and regulations governing food safety in America have not been updated since they were written in the time of Teddy Roosevelt. It's also because our system of inspection and enforcement is spread out so widely among so many people that it's difficult for different parts of our Government to share information, work together, and solve problems. And it's also because the FDA has been underfunded and understaffed in recent years, leaving the agency with the resources to inspect just 7,000 of our 150,000 food processing plants and warehouses each year. That means roughly 95% of them go uninspected.

That is a hazard to public health. It is unacceptable, and it will change under the leadership of Dr. Margaret Hamburg, whom I am appointing today as Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration. From her research on infectious disease at the National Institutes of Health to her work on public health at the Department of Health and Human Services to her leadership on biodefense at the Nuclear Threat Initiative, Dr. Hamburg brings to this vital position not only a reputation of integrity but a record of achievement in making Americans safer and more secure. Dr. Hamburg was one of the youngest people ever elected to the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine. And her two children have a unique distinction of their own. Their birth certificates feature her name twice, once as their mother and once as New York City health commissioner. In that role, Dr. Hamburg brought a new life to a demoralized agency, leading an internationally recognized initiative that cut the tuberculosis rate by nearly half and overseeing food safety in our Nation's largest city.

Joining her as Principal Deputy Commissioner will be Dr. Joshua Sharfstein. As Baltimore's health commissioner, Dr. Sharfstein has been recognized as a national leader for his efforts to protect children from unsafe

over-the-counter cough and cold medications. And he's designed an award-winning program to ensure that Americans with disabilities had access to prescription drugs.

Their critical work, and the critical work of the FDA they lead, will be part of a larger effort taken up by a new food safety working group I am creating. This working group will bring together Cabinet Secretaries and senior officials to advise me on how we can upgrade our food safety laws for the 21st century, foster coordination throughout government, and ensure that we are not just designing laws that will keep the American people safe, but enforcing them. And I expect this group to report back to me with recommendations as soon as possible.

As part of our commitment to public health, our Agriculture Department is closing a loophole in the system to ensure that diseased cows don't find their way into the food supply. And we are also strengthening our food safety system and modernizing our labs with a billion dollar investment, a portion of which will go toward significantly increasing the number of food inspectors, helping ensure that the FDA has the staff and support they need to protect the food we eat.

In the end, food safety is something I take seriously, not just as your President, but as a parent. When I heard peanut products were being contaminated earlier this year, I immediately thought of my 7-year-old daughter, Sasha, who has peanut butter sandwiches for lunch probably three times a week. No parent should have to worry that their child is going to get sick from their lunch, just as no family should have to worry that the medicines they buy will cause them harm. Protecting the safety of our food and drugs is one of the most fundamental responsibilities Government has, and with the outstanding team I am announcing today, it is a responsibility that I intend to uphold in the months and years to come.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4 p.m. on March 13 in the Red Room at the White House for broadcast on March 14. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 13 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 14.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil and an Exchange With Reporters
March 14, 2009

President Obama. Hello, everybody. Sorry to make you guys work on a Saturday. The President and I just had a wonderful meeting. I have been a great admirer of Brazil and a great admirer of the progressive, forward-looking leadership that President Lula has shown throughout Latin America and throughout the world.

We have a very strong friendship between the two countries, but we can always make it stronger, and in areas like energy and biofuels, in the interest in increasing the standards of living in impoverished countries throughout Latin America, expanding trade relationships, you know, the President and I had a wonderful meeting of the minds.

And I'm grateful that he took the time to visit with us. We intend to have a host of meetings at a ministerial level in the coming days and weeks, both in preparation of—for the G–20, to coordinate our activities to strengthen global economic growth; also in anticipation of the Summit of the Americas that will be taking place in April, so that we can have a proactive strategy that uses the strength of the U.S.-Brazilian relationship to strengthen ties throughout the hemisphere. So I'm very grateful to him for taking the time to visit, and I'm looking forward to reciprocating in a visit to Brazil sometime soon.

President Lula da Silva. First of all, I'd like to say that we have shown very good relations between the U.S. and Brazil.

Secondly, I mention the importance of President Obama's election, what it represents to the world and especially to Latin America.

The third issue that we discussed is the economic crisis that the world is facing today. President Obama and myself are truly convinced

that the economic crisis can be resolved by political decisions that could be made on the G–20 meeting.

We need to restore credibility, vis-a-vis society, with the financial system. We need to restore credibility and trust of the people, vis-a-vis the governments, and for that we need to make credit flowing and pouring in all countries and also to facilitate trade flow amongst different countries. And we will work together to build a proposal for the G–20 meeting. I believe that is extremely important, that all the rulers and leaders that will participate in the G–20 meeting should be convinced that we have to make more quicker decisions.

That is to say, the number of unemployed people are increasing in the world, and the unemployed of today is a social problem of tomorrow. Because—we have to take care of this issue very seriously because we already see migrant workers facing many problems in different countries.

We also discussed other matters that are of common interest in the U.S.-Brazil relations. The possibility for us to do some joint work vis-a-vis Africa, to try to establish a development policy for Latin America, and mainly to strengthen our relations and what has to do with biofuels. And I also believe that President Obama carries the responsibility and has a unique and exceptional position to improve the relationships with Latin America.

And I told President Obama that I know it won't be easy, but we should try to reopen the Doha round negotiations. And I also told President Obama, that in the public rallies that I have in Brazil, that I tell to the Brazilian people, I'm praying more for him than I pray for myself. Because with just 40 days in office, to suffer and to face such a terrible crisis the U.S. is facing today, I don't want to be in his position. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. Well, I tell you what, you sound like you've been talking to my wife. [*Laughter*]

We're going to call on a couple of reporters. I'm going to start with Mark Knoller at CBS Radio.

U.S. Government Securities/U.S. Financial Markets

Q. Yes, Mr. President. China's Premier is worried about the trillion dollars his Government has invested in U.S. Government securities. He wants a guarantee. Is there something you can say to him to allay his concerns?

And, President Lula, your Government also has investments in U.S. Government securities. Are you worried about them as well?

President Obama. Well, I think that there's a reason why even in the midst of this economic crisis you've seen actual increases in investment flows here into the United States. I think it's a recognition that the stability not only of our economic system, but also our political system, is extraordinary.

And so I think that not just the Chinese Government, but every investor, can have absolute confidence in the soundness of investments in the United States. And that is not just in U.S.-issued Treasury notes, but also in the private sector and the commerce and the industry that has made this the most dynamic economy in the world.

There was a question directed to President Lula.

President Lula da Silva. I believe that we do have a concern. What is the basic concern? As the money from the emerging countries, there's some flight to buy Treasury bonds in countries like the U.S., then we'll have less money in our domestic market, so that we can put to work industrial sector. This is a problem that we will have to discuss at the G–20 meeting.

I say every day, Brazil was the last country to be affected by the crisis, but we also have the possibility to be one of the first countries to resolve and get out of the crisis. We're not facing any problem in our financial system. Maybe we can face some problems with our exports and with a credit crunch. But the truth of the matter is that money has vanished, and if we don't make credit supply flowing again, then yes, the crisis could deepen in our countries. So that's why I believe it's urgent to reestablish credit supply in the world.

Energy/Alternative Fuel Sources/Trade

Q. I have a question for President Lula and a question for President Obama. President Lula said that during their meeting they talked about energy, President Obama talked about a possible partnership for energy within the hemisphere. So the question I have is, can't this partnership get off balance? Because there's a lot of interest in the future of Brazilian oil; however, Brazilians do not understand today how come that a fuel that is a clean fuel, that is renewable fuel can't reach the U.S. market because of duties, whereas the same product, essential clean fuel, in the United States gets incentives. And where would be the balance between these two issues?

President Obama. Is that directed at me? Well, look, I think Brazil has shown extraordinary leadership when it comes to biofuels. And I've been a great admirer of the steps that have been taken by President Lula's Government in pursuing biofuels and developing them. And that's—this is an investment that Brazil has made for a very long time.

My policies coming into this administration have been to redouble efforts here in the United States to pursue a similar path of clean energy development. And I think we have a lot to learn from Brazil.

As I mentioned to President Lula, I think that we have the potential to exchange ideas, technology to build on the biodiesel cooperation structure that we've already established. I know that the issue of Brazilian ethanol coming into the United States has been a source of tension between the two countries. It's not going to change overnight, but I do think that as we continue to build exchanges of ideas, commerce, trade around the issue of biodiesel, that over time this source of tension can get resolved.

President Lula da Silva. This is the very first meeting that we have between the Brazilian administration and President Obama's administration to discuss this issue. Actually, my answer is built in your question. I can't also understand while the world is concerned with climate change and with carbon emissions that bring greenhouse effect—[*inaudible*]—fuel is—gets tariffs and clean fuel is—also gets tariffs. I have discussed this already with Angela Merkel, with Tony Blair when he was Prime Minister, with President of France Sarkozy, with former President Bush.

I never expect an immediate answer; this is a process. As times goes by, Brazil is proving that biofuel is an extraordinary alternative. And slowly the countries will be convinced of this. And slowly other countries will join the biofuel effort. That's what I believe in.

A seminar will be held in New York City on Monday, where I will attend, and this will be a strong issue that will be discussed there. I talked with President Obama about the possibility for us to build partnerships and—with third-party countries, especially a joint project with the African Continent. And things will move forward as people start changing. No one can change overnight, in terms of their energy matrix. Thank God for 30 years Brazil has already control—technological control and know-how on this issue.

And when President Obama comes to visit Brazil, I'm going to ask him to get inside a car that is run by a flex-fuel engine, and he will feel very comfortable.

President Obama. I actually had a flex-fuel vehicle. But one of the problems here in the United States is, is that we don't have enough gas stations that have biofuels in them. So that's one of the areas that we need to change, our distribution networks here in the United States.

We've got Jeff Mason [Reuters]?

Upcoming G–20 Meeting/Global Financial Markets

Q. Yes, sir, right here. Mr. President and Mr. President, you mentioned the G–20. Do you intend to work together on moves related to fiscal stimulus? Did you ask the President to join the side of the U.S. in pushing for fiscal stimulus over financial regulation? And, Mr. President, do you side with the Europeans or with the U.S. on that issue?

President Obama. Jeff, I'm glad you gave me the opportunity to address this. I don't know where this notion has emerged that somehow there are sides developing with respect to the G–20. They're not emerging from Tim Geithner, they're not coming from Larry Summers,

and they're not coming from me. So unless you have some secret source in the administration, if you will follow the track of this storyline, it is completely contrary to what our policies are.

Look, this is not a either/or question; this is a both/and question. We do believe that it is important for all countries around the world to step in and figure out how we can ensure that we are compensating for the drastic contraction in global demand. We're not unique in that position. Gordon Brown feels the same way, as does President Hu in China. Kevin Rudd has taken similar steps in Australia. And the Europeans have taken some steps with respect to stimulus and increasing global demand.

Not every country is going to do the same levels. I think it would be useful if we have a international body that is getting—that is accounting for how much stimulus is taking place out there, just so that, you know, various foreign ministries can keep track of what's happening with respect to global demand.

But as I've said here in this country, and I will repeat in the G–20, fiscal stimulus is only one leg in the stool. We have to do financial regulation, and nobody is going to be a more vigorous promoter of the need for a reform of our financial systems. I think most of those initiatives are going to be taking place in individual countries, but there's going to need to be coordination between the various countries.

And I've already spoken to my economic team, along with Members of Congress, and I've said to the American people, we are going to be moving very aggressively to make sure that the systemic risks that exist right now, that we are dealing with those so that this kind of crisis will not happen again.

So I can't be clearer in saying that there are no sides. This is a phony debate that I think has been—has evolved over the last few days in the news cycle. We think that we have to take a whole range of approaches. Financial regulation is front and center in terms of issues that we want to deal with. We also think we've got to see worldwide, concerted action to make sure that the massive contraction in demand is dealt with.

And then there are going to be other steps to deal with emerging markets, for example, and what are we doing to help them get access to credit, very poor countries—figuring out how do we make sure that their food supplies are adequately dealt with.

So there are going to be a host of issues that we have to deal with. But in my mind, at least, there is no conflict or contradiction between the positions of the G–20 countries and how we're going to be moving forward. There's going to be differences in details. Those are being worked out right now. I expect to have a productive meeting.

Sorry to take so long on the answer, but, you know, Jeff always does this to me.

President Lula da Silva. In Latin America, that's not a problem, Mr. President. Presidents talking too much, it's not a problem at all, because we all talk too much. [*Laughter*] But it's very good that you should take into account the following.

On April the 2d in London, the main leaders of the world would gather, and we cannot afford going to such a meeting and—just to discuss whom we should put the blame on. We have to sit in that roundtable and find a resolution to the crisis. We all know that we have to restore credit supply policies in the world. We have to have a special credit supply for the poorest countries and the underdeveloped countries. And that we also have to strengthen international institutions like the IMF, the World Bank, and so on.

So we will attend that meeting to make decisions. We are in a large ship and water is leaking. Now is the time to fix the leaking and make the economy go back to the tracks. And there are two key words: reestablish and restore credit in the world, and restore trust and confidence between—amongst the people. And then from there on we'll make the decisions. We can have some divergence at some time, but that belongs—it's proper to democracy.

I am confident that this crisis is a very delicate one, but at the same time, it is an extraordinary opportunity so that we can prove for those that elected us that we are capable to cope with major issues. Every country has to

go back and start investing in infrastructure, in housing projects, in education, in health care.

The bottom line is that: what we need. And I'm sure that that's President Obama's concern, too. And my own concern is to create jobs, to create income and consumption and that on the—that it will also—that—unfold and generate new development.

So I'm very much optimistic. There's no individual way out for a country in this crisis; that we have to make joint decisions, and that's why I will go to London to participate in this discussion.

President Obama. One last question—[*inaudible*].

Trade/Global Financial Markets

Q. [*Inaudible*]—Mr. President.

President Obama. How are you?

Q. Good, thanks. You both have been criticizing—both of you criticized protectionism and warning people about the dangers of protectionism, especially in a crisis time like this one. However, Brazil refuses to make concessions that the U.S. thinks are important so that there—some progress can be done at WTO. At the same time, the U.S. adopts a stimulus package that prevents Brazilian businesses or companies to participate in projects that are financed by the stimulus package. Has there been any progress made in these two attitudes so that will give this whole discourse a practical tone?

President Obama. Well, we discussed this during the course of our meeting, and we are going to have our—Foreign Minister of Brazil and the Secretary of State for the United States, Senator—Secretary Clinton, discuss these issues in more detail.

I think it is very important for all countries to recognize that trade is an important engine for economic growth. I think there's a natural tendency at a time of economic difficulty—people losing their jobs, businesses closing—to want to focus inward and ensure that any sacrifices are taking place somewhere else, as opposed to here at home, because people are already going through tremendous hardships. That's true in Brazil; that's true here in the United States.

But I think that it is important for us to understand that, ultimately, U.S. businesses will benefit from our exports, that imports from Brazil can actually provide us access to products and services that consumers want here in the United States. I think the same is true in Brazil, the same is true worldwide. Our goal should be to at least not go backwards.

So for example, the "Buy American" provision that was in our stimulus bill, my administration worked actively with our Congress to make sure that any provision in there did not violate WTO and will not be interpreted in a way that violates the WTO. And I'm sure that President Lula is going to be taking similar steps in Brazil to make sure that we are not moving in reverse when it comes to world trade.

It may be difficult for us to finalize a whole host of trade deals in the midst of an economic crisis like this one, although we have committed to sitting down with our Brazilian counterparts to find ways that we can start closing the gap on the Doha round and other potential trade agreements.

So I'm optimistic that we'll be able to make progress. It may not happen immediately. In the meantime, we just have to make sure that we're sending a message to our respective countries that, ultimately, job growth, income growth, building our way out of this economic crisis doesn't involve trying to draw a fence around each respective country, but we all have to rise together.

President Lula da Silva. Just one thing to mention, there's a certain unjustice that you made in your question towards me. Brazil has undertaken an immense effort so that we can reach the Doha round negotiation agreement still during the Bush administration. Why didn't we manage to close the deal if everybody was agreeing to do so and there's only a minor divergence between the U.S. and India?

I imagine that that happened because of electoral reasons. That's why we didn't manage to reach a deal at the Doha round, because Brazil made concessions on industrial products, and Europe and the U.S. almost managed to reach market access on agriculture from emerging—for the emerging markets. And at the end, we stayed only with two issues: one agricultural

issue in India, and the other one was the subsidies and the agriculture in the U.S.

I believe that now in the midst of this economic crisis, it's more difficult for us to conclude and reach a deal at the Doha round. But at the same time, I believe that to conclude the Doha round could be one of the components to relieve the poorest or less developed countries in the world vis-a-vis this crisis.

The U.S. and Brazil trade balance is around $54 billion. The U.S. exports 26 billion to Brazil, and Brazil exports to the U.S. around 28 billion. So it is clear, for the size of the two countries, we don't have much trade flow in our trade balance between the two countries. What is the issue? What happens is that every country just wants to sell. Every country wants to engage in trade surplus. It's a two-way street. It's not possible that can happen in international trade; you sell and buy to keep the balance.

And we need to strengthen this idea because protectionism now, in this moment, in my opinion, would aggravate the economic crisis. If we stop tapping the water in international trade, it's like taking out a fish out of water, and then we'll lack water. So now we have to bring more dynamics—[*inaudible*]. On the one hand, our domestic economies, and on the other hand we have to help to make more—[*inaudible*]—credit for trade, for international trade. And I think it's—this is much more than—[*inaudible*].

I hope that the U.S. and Brazil can mature their thinking and then we can come and arrive on April the 2d in London, and together with other countries we can present to the world a solution. Financial system—yes, it needs regulation; we cannot avoid that. What will be the size of the regulation? Let's discuss it in London. I'm very optimistic.

President Obama. I'm always optimistic, and I've had a wonderful visit with the President, and I'm looking forward to seeing him in Brazil.

The President's Visit to Brazil/Brazil-U.S. Relations

Q. When? When?

President Obama. Well, you know, we haven't gotten the date yet. I will tell you that because I'm somebody who grew up in Hawaii, I felt it was very important that I at least go to Rio, where I understand the beaches are pretty nice. [*Laughter*]

Q. Can you start at the Amazon?

President Obama. You know, I would love a trip to the Amazon. I suspect that the Republican Party would love to see me travel through the Amazon and maybe get lost for a while. [*Laughter*] But I'm not sure what——

Q. We won't let that happen.

President Obama. We don't know how long we'll be able to stay, but this will just be the first visit. Hopefully it will be visits that are repeated in the future. So—but we've had a wonderful visit. I can tell that the relationship between our two countries is only going to get stronger.

Thank you. Appreciate it. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President's spoke at 12:17 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, the he referred to Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner; Lawrence H. Summers, Director, National Economic Council; Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Kevin M. Rudd of Australia; and Minister of Foreign Relations Celso Luiz Nunes Amorim of Brazil. President Lula da Silva referred to Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; former Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom, Quartet Representative in the Middle East; and former President George W. Bush. A reporter referred to Premier Wen Jiabao of China. President Lula da Silva and a reporter spoke in Portuguese, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks to Small-Business Owners and Community Lenders
March 16, 2009

The President. Thank you very much. First of all, Marco, thank you for the wonderful introduction. I don't know if people heard properly here, but this is a all-natural health food restaurant in Philly. [*Laughter*] So I asked him what was the equivalent at his shop for a cheesesteak. [*Laughter*] And he described for me—what was it, a chicken——

Marco Lentini. It's our chicken Italiano. [*Laughter*] It's a chicken cutlet, spinach Florentine, sharp provolone, all on an Italian ciabatta bread. [*Laughter*]

The President. Right. So I wanted to know if there was whiz on that. [*Laughter*] And he said no. [*Laughter*]

But Marco is an example of what small business is all about. And I think Cynthia is an example of what community banks are doing all across the country, partnering with small businesses in order to create jobs and opportunity and entrepreneurship that's been the driving force in our economy for so very long.

So I thank all of you, particularly the small businesses and community bankers who are here today. And I thank the two of you, as well as some of the other entrepreneurs that we met, and bankers that we met, before this public event. Thank you for sharing your stories.

I also want to thank the chair and ranking member of the Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, Senators Mary Landrieu and Olympia Snowe. Please give them a big round of applause. As well as the chair and ranking member of the House Committee on Small Business, Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez and Congressman Sam Graves, who are here as well. I want to thank them publicly for being here, but also so much of the good work that our proposals today are building on has to do with the vigilance that they've shown on their committees. So we very much appreciate that.

Now, before I talk about the new steps that we're taking to get credit flowing to small businesses across our country, I do want to comment on the news about executive bonuses at AIG. I think some of you have heard a little bit about this over the last few days. This is a corporation that finds itself in financial distress due to recklessness and greed. Under these circumstances, it's hard to understand how derivative traders at AIG warranted any bonuses, much less $165 million in extra pay. I mean, how do they justify this outrage to the taxpayers who are keeping the company afloat?

In the last 6 months, AIG has received substantial sums from the U.S. Treasury. And I've asked Secretary Geithner to use that leverage and pursue every single legal avenue to block these bonuses and make the American taxpayers whole. I want everybody to be clear that Secretary Geithner has been on the case. He's working to resolve this matter with the new CEO, Edward Liddy—who, by the way, everybody needs to understand came on board after the contracts that led to these bonuses were agreed to last year.

But I think Mr. Liddy and certainly everybody involved needs to understand this is not just a matter of dollars and cents, it's about our fundamental values. All across the country, there are people who are working hard and meeting their responsibilities every single day, without the benefit of Government bailouts or multimillion dollar bonuses. You've got a bunch of small-businesspeople here who are struggling just to keep their credit line open, that they are foregoing pay, as one of our entrepreneurs talked about; they are in some cases mortgaging their homes and doing a whole host of things just in order to keep things afloat. All they ask is that everyone, from Main Street to Wall Street to Washington, play by the same rules. And that is an ethic that we have to demand.

And what this situation also underscores is the need for overall financial regulatory reform, so we don't find ourselves in this position again, and for some form of resolution mechanism in dealing with troubled financial institutions, so that we've got greater authority to protect American taxpayers and our financial system in cases such as this.

Now, we already have resolution authority—[*coughing*]—excuse me. I'm choked up

with anger here—[*laughter*]. We always—already have some of that resolution authority when it comes to a traditional bank. But when you start getting into AIGs and some of these other operations that have a whole bunch of different financial instruments, then we don't have all the regulatory power that we need. And this is something that I expect to work with Congress to deal with in the weeks and months to come.

Well, we're here today to talk about how my administration can help the millions of small businesses bearing the brunt of this credit crisis. And Secretary Geithner and I just met with not only Marco and Cynthia, but a number of other small-business owners and community lenders who shared with us experiences that are familiar to so many.

Small businesses are the heart of the American economy. They're responsible for half of all private sector jobs, and they create roughly 70 percent of all new jobs in the past decade. So small businesses are not only job generators, they're also at the heart of the American Dream. After all, these are businesses born in family meetings around kitchen tables. They're born when a worker takes a chance on her desire to be her own boss. They're born when a part-time inventor becomes a full-time entrepreneur, or when somebody sees a product that could be better or a service that could be smarter, and they think, "Well, why not me? Let me try it. Let me take my shot." That's Marco's story, which he just shared with us.

That's Brian Conrad's story. When Brian's company eliminated his department—Brian is sitting right there, so I don't want to embarrass him here, but it's a great story—he lost his job, but he found his calling and started, you know, doing all kinds of work on a restaurant called the Blue Monkey, which now employs some 40 people in Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley.

That's Carmen Jones's story. Carmen is over there. Carmen was disabled in an accident a few years ago. And in facing personal trials, she discovered a reservoir of strength and an untapped market. So today, she helps companies advertise and sell their services to people living with disabilities.

Now, this is America's story, a place where we believe all things are possible, where we are limited only by our willingness to take a chance and work hard to achieve our dreams. But today, too many entrepreneurs can't access the capital to start, operate, or grow their business. Too many dreams are being deferred or denied by a form letter canceling a line of credit.

And this is a consequence of the credit crisis, which began when some banks bundled and sold mortgages in complex ways to hide risk and avoid responsibility. The collapse of these mortgage-backed securities and other complex financial instruments froze the credit markets, including the markets that helped small businesses access loans to cover payroll, to purchase supplies, or to expand in ways that create new jobs.

So, and I think it's important just to take a moment to understand: Here's how these markets work. A community bank like the one run by Cynthia offers an entrepreneur like Marco a loan to open up a restaurant. Before this crisis, Cynthia had two options. Her bank could hold the loan and receive regular payments from Marco as he pays back the amount that he borrowed plus interest. But another option was the bank could also sell part of the loan as an asset to a larger bank or to an investor. And that means that her bank could then use these new funds for more business loans and auto loans and home loans and student loans.

That's why this secondary market—Cynthia's ability to resell loans—is so important: It means banks can offer small businesses and families more credit because the bank has more money on hand. If Cynthia could get that $11 million that—of SBA loans that she currently holds in her portfolio, if she can get that into the secondary market, that's now $11 million that she can make work back in her community.

Today, unfortunately, there aren't nearly as many secondary buyers for these kinds of loans, even when they're guaranteed by the Small Business Administration. So community banks cannot bring in the funds necessary to provide as many loans. And as a result, we've

seen a precipitous drop in lending to small business.

The SBA typically guarantees $20 billion in loans annually. But this year, lending may fall below $10 billion. Even businesses with impeccable credit can't access loans.

So entrepreneurs and their employees pay an enormous price. But the whole country pays a price as well, because less lending leads to fewer jobs and lower spending, which leads to less lending, a vicious cycle that delays our recovery. And small businesses don't just provide jobs, they provide the innovations that help us lead in the global economy.

Smaller companies produce 13 times more patents per employee than large companies. Now, think about it. Hewlett-Packard began in a garage—it was a small business. Google began as a research project—small business. The first Apple computers were built by hand one at a time—small business. McDonald's started with one restaurant—Marco, I know you've got ideas—[*laughter*]—small business.

Our recovery in the present and our prosperity in the future depend upon the success of America's small businesses and entrepreneurs. And that's why my administration has already taken aggressive action on their behalf. My recovery plan, as has already been noted, raises the guarantees on SBA loans to 90 percent and eliminates costly fees for borrowers and lenders that can be too costly in a recession. And these changes are being implemented now, fulfilling a campaign promise that I made. The recovery plan also includes a series of tax cuts for small businesses and tax incentives to encourage investments in small businesses. And the Treasury Department has launched the Consumer and Business Lending Initiative to help unfreeze the credit markets.

I've also proposed, as part of my budget, that we reduce to zero the capital gains tax for investments in small or startup businesses, expanding and making permanent one of the tax cuts in the recovery plan. And my budget, as part of our health care reform efforts, calls for tax credits and other assistance to help small businesses offer coverage to their workers.

So we've already done a lot, but we've got to do more. And none of these steps will be effective unless we unlock the credit markets that are denying small businesses the loans they need to grow.

Therefore, as part of my financial stability plan, the Treasury Department will begin purchasing up to $15 billion of SBA loans through the Troubled Asset Relief Program or TARP. We will immediately unfreeze the secondary market for SBA loans and increase the liquidity of community banks. Cynthia's bank is going to be able to sell those $11 million in loans so that she's got more money to lend.

So with this action, any lender that provides SBA small-business loans will have a buyer for those loans. And in turn, community banks will no longer have to choose between providing loans to creditworthy small businesses and maintaining the required capital and liquidity.

Now, this plan is the latest step—but by no means the last step—in our ongoing efforts to stabilize the financial markets on behalf of businesses and consumers. We'll be outlining further steps on behalf of small businesses in the weeks and months ahead. And we will continue to do whatever is necessary to lead this economy out of recession and lay the foundation for long-term prosperity.

That's what the small-business owners in this room expect us to do. They're folks like John Wilson, the president and part owner of a small business in Raleigh, North Carolina. He wrote to me a few weeks ago and participated in the meeting we just held.

And John's business, N.C. Design Group, sells cabinets and interior design services. And not surprisingly, it's been a tough year. Sales have fallen by half. And keep in mind, John had previously doubled what had started off as a very small business, to the point where he's providing a living for—it was up to 40—48 people. And John did all that he could to save loans. The owners, including John, have taken no compensation, but they had to reduce the size of their company from 48 employees to 34. And John just told the group of us that he personally took the time to speak to each and every person that he had to lay off. And I don't think he minds me sharing that he cried each time he did it, because it's a hard thing when somebody is working hard and committed to helping you

build your business, you having to lay them off.

And now, even though they've never been late on a payment to the bank, they're having trouble keeping a credit line. It's putting his small business—and the 34 jobs left—in jeopardy.

Now, John is not looking for a handout, he's looking for the opportunity to succeed. And he said it best himself in his letter, and I'm quoting from the letter here: "Small businesspeople are incredibly resilient and resourceful given half a chance," he said. "But we need the chance."

Well, I want to say to John and to every American running a small business or hoping to run a small business one day: You deserve a chance. America needs you to have that chance. And as President, I will continue to do everything in my power to ensure that you have the opportunity to contribute to your community, to our economy, and to the future of the United States of America.

Thank you, everybody. Thank you. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:29 p.m. in East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Marco Lentini, founder and president, Avanti Food Corporation/Gia Pronto, who introduced the President; Cynthia L. Blankenship, vice chairman and chief operations officer, Bank of the West; Brian Conrad, owner, Blue Monkey Sports Restaurant; and Carmen D. Jones, founder and president, Solutions Marketing Group.

Remarks on the 20th Anniversary of the Department of Veterans Affairs
March 16, 2009

Thank you very much. To Jim Benson for helping to organize this; for Mahdee for your service to our country, a pledge of allegiance that you've shown in your own commitment to protecting this country; and obviously, to Secretary Shinseki: It is an honor to join you and the hard-working public servants here at the Department of Veterans Affairs as we mark a milestone in the distinguished history of this Department.

You know, 20 years ago, on the day the Veterans Administration was officially elevated to a Cabinet-level agency and renamed the Department of Veterans Affairs, a ceremony was held to swear in the Administrator of the old entity as Secretary of the new one. And in his remarks that day, President George H.W. Bush declared that the mission of this agency is, quote, "so vital that there's only one place for the veterans of America: in the Cabinet Room, at the table with the President of the United States of America." And I could not agree more.

I could not be more pleased that Eric Shinseki has taken a seat at that table. Throughout his long and distinguished career in the Army, Secretary Shinseki won the respect and admiration of our men and women in uniform because they've always been his highest priority, and he has clearly brought that same sense of duty and commitment to the work of serving our veterans.

As he knows, it's no small task. This Department has more than a quarter of a million employees across America, and its services range from providing education and training benefits, health care and home loans, to tending those quiet places that remind us of the great debt we owe and remind me of the heavy responsibility that I bear. It's a commitment that lasts from the day our veterans retire that uniform to the day that they are put to rest and that continues on for their families.

Without this commitment, I might not be here today. After all, my grandfather enlisted after Pearl Harbor and went on to march in Patton's army. My grandmother worked on a bomber assembly line while he was gone. My mother was born at Fort Leavenworth while he was away. When my grandfather returned, he went to college on the GI bill, bought his first home with a loan from the VHA, moved his family west, all the way to Hawaii, where he and my grandmother helped to raise me.

And I think about my grandfather whenever I have the privilege of meeting the young men

and women who serve in our military today. They are our best and brightest, and they're our bravest: enlisting in a time of war, enduring tour after tour of duty, serving with honor under the most difficult circumstances, and making sacrifices that many of us cannot begin to imagine. The same can be said of their families, as my wife Michelle has seen firsthand during visits to military bases across this country. We don't just deploy our troops in a time of war, we deploy their families too.

So while the mission of this Department is always vital, it is even more so during long and difficult conflicts like those that we're engaged in today. Because when the guns finally fall silent and the cameras are turned off and our troops return home, they deserve the same commitment from their Government as my grandparents received.

Last month, I announced my strategy for ending the war in Iraq. And I made it very clear that this strategy would not end with the military plans and diplomatic agendas, but would endure through my commitment to upholding our sacred trust with every man and woman who has served this country. And the same holds true for our troops serving in Afghanistan.

The homecoming we face over the next year and a half will be the true test of this commitment: whether we will stand with our veterans as they face new challenges—physical, psychological, and economic—here at home.

I intend to start that work by making good on my pledge to transform the Department of Veterans Affairs for the 21st century. That's an effort that, under Secretary Shinseki's leadership, all of you have already begun conducting a thorough review of your operations all across this agency. And I intend to support this effort not just with words of encouragement, but with resources. And that's why the budget I sent to Congress increases funding for this Department by $25 billion over the next 5 years.

With this budget, we don't just fully fund our VA health care program, we expand it to serve an additional 500,000 veterans by 2013, to provide better health care in more places, and to dramatically improve services related to mental health and injuries like Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and traumatic brain injury. We also invest in the technology to cut redtape and ease the transition from active duty. And we provide new help for homeless veterans, because those heroes have a home; it's the country they served, the United States of America. And until we reach a day when not a single veteran sleeps on our Nation's streets, our work remains unfinished. Now—[*applause*].

Finally, in this new century, it's time to heed the lesson of history, that our returning veterans can form the backbone of our middle class, by implementing a GI bill for the 21st century. I know you're working hard under a tough deadline, but I am confident that we will be ready for August 1st. And that's how we'll show our service men and women that when you come home to America, America will be here for you. That's how we will ensure that those who have borne the battle, and their families, will have every chance to live out their dreams.

I've had the privilege of meeting so many of these heroes. And some of the most inspiring are those that I've met in places like Walter Reed, young men and women who've lost a limb or even their ability to take care of themselves, but who never lose the pride they feel for their country. And that is, after all, what led them to wear the uniform in the first place, their unwavering belief in the idea of America: That no matter where you come from, what you look like, who your parents are, this is a place where anything is possible, where anyone can make it, where we take care of each other and look out for each other, especially for those who've sacrificed so much for this country.

These are the ideals that generations of Americans have fought for and bled for and died for. These are the ideals at the core of your mission, a mission that dates back before our founding, one taken up by our first President years before he took office, back when he served as Commander in Chief of the Continental Army. Then-General Washington fought tirelessly to support the veterans of America's Revolutionary War. Such support, he argued, should "never be considered as a pension or gratuity. . ."—rather—". . . it was the price of their blood," and of our independence; ". . . it is, therefore," he said, "more than a common debt, it is a debt of honor"—a debt of honor.

Washington understood that caring for our veterans was more than just a way of thanking them for their service. He recognized the obligation is deeper than that, that when our fellow citizens commit themselves to shed blood for us, that binds our fates with theirs in a way that nothing else can. And in the end, caring for those who have given their fullest measure of devotion to us—and for their families—is a matter of honor, as a nation and as a people.

That's a responsibility you hold; that's the work that you do, repaying that debt of honor, a debt we can never fully discharge. And I know it's not always easy. I know there's much work ahead to transform this agency for the 21st century. But I have the fullest confidence that with Secretary Shinseki's leadership, and with the hard work of the men and women of this Department, we will fulfill our sacred trust and serve our returning heroes as well as they've served us.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:20 p.m. at the Veterans Affairs Department. In his remarks, he referred to James R. Benson, public affairs specialist, and Mahdee Sabir, program specialist, Department of Veterans Affairs; and former Secretary of Veterans Affairs Edward J. Derwinski.

Remarks on the Federal Budget
March 17, 2009

Hello, everybody. Happy St. Patrick's Day. Green tie, not bad, huh? Conrad didn't get the memo. You didn't, either.

Good morning. With the budget committees hard at work this week, I wanted to meet with Chairman Conrad and Chairman Spratt to talk about the progress they're making on this budget resolution.

Because these are no ordinary times, I don't just view this budget document as numbers on a page or a laundry list of programs, I see it as a economic blueprint for our future, a foundation on which to build a recovery that lasts.

Now, this budget does not attempt to solve every problem or address every issue. Because of the massive deficit we inherited and the enormous costs of this financial crisis, we have made some tough choices that will cut our deficit in half by the end of my first term and reduce it by $2 trillion over the next decade. That will bring discretionary spending for domestic programs as a share of the economy to its lowest level in nearly half a century.

What we will not cut back, however, are those investments that are directly linked to our long-term prosperity. As I said last week, we can't go back to a bubble economy, an economy based on reckless speculation and spending beyond our means, on bad credit and inflated home prices, and some of the shenanigans that have been taking place on Wall Street. Such activity does not lead to the creation of lasting wealth. It leads to the illusion of prosperity, and as we're finding out, it hurts us all in the end.

And that's why this budget makes the investments that will lead to real growth and real prosperity, investments that will make a difference in the lives of this generation and future generations because it makes us more productive.

Because so many Americans are just one illness or medical emergency away from bankruptcy, we have made a historic commitment to health care reform in this budget, reform that will finally lower costs for families, businesses, and State governments; reform that's not a luxury, but a necessity if we hope to bring down the cost of Medicare and Medicaid so that we can reduce our deficit in the long run. This is a fight that Kent Conrad and John Spratt have been fighting for a long time. The two gentlemen standing with me today, they've been leaders in efforts to get these entitlement programs under control, and they understand that if we don't solve the problem of health care costs now, we are not going to be able to get a handle on entitlements down the road.

Because we know that the countries who outeducate us today will outcompete us tomorrow, this budget also invests in a complete and competitive education for every American, in early childhood education programs that work, in high standards and accountability for our schools, in rewards for teachers who succeed, and an affordable college education for anyone who wants to go. That's the reason the three of us are standing here today. None of us were born with a silver spoon in our mouths, but we got a great education. And if we combine additional resources with a commitment to reform, then I think we can deliver that for every American child.

Because we know that the new jobs and new industries of tomorrow will involve harnessing renewable resources—renewable sources of energy, this budget will finally spark the transformation we need to create those jobs and those businesses right here in America. It makes clean energy the profitable kind of energy, and it invests in technologies like wind power and solar power, advanced biofuels, clean coal, fuel-efficient cars and trucks.

And because millions of Americans are already struggling under the weight of their monthly bills and mortgage payments, this budget does not raise the taxes of any family making less than $250,000 a year by a single dime. In fact, 95 percent of all working families will receive a tax cut as a result of our recovery plan.

Now, there are those who say the plans in this budget are too ambitious to enact; to say that—they say that in the face of challenges that we face, we should be trying to do less than more. What I say is that the challenges we face are too large to ignore. The cost of our health care is too high to ignore. The dependence on oil is too dangerous to ignore. Our education deficit is growing too wide to ignore. To kick these problems down the road for another 4 years or another 8 years would be to continue the same irresponsibility that led us to this point. That's not why I ran for this office. I didn't come here to pass on our problems to the next President or the next generation; I came here to solve them.

I know that there are some on Wall Street and in Washington who've said that we should only focus on the banking crisis and one problem at a time. Well, we're spending a lot of time focusing on this banking crisis, and we will continue to do so because until we get liquidity flowing again, we will not fully recover. But the American people don't have the luxury of just focusing on Wall Street. They don't have the luxury of choosing to pay either their mortgage or their medical bills. They don't get to pick between paying for their kids' college tuition and saving enough money for retirement. They have to do all these things. They have to confront all these problems, and as a consequence, so do we.

Now, there's been a lot of discussion about this budget already, and I hope we engage in a healthy debate going forward. The challenges we face are not partisan. We're going to get some numbers with respect to the budget that may make this even tougher in the coming couple of weeks. The answers don't have to be partisan, and I welcome and encourage proposals and improvements from both Democrats and Republicans in the coming days.

But the one thing I will say is this: With the magnitude of the challenges we face right now, what we need in Washington are not more political tactics; we need more good ideas. We don't need more point-scoring; we need more problem-solving. So if there are Members of Congress who object to specific policies and proposals in this budget, then I ask them to be ready and willing to propose constructive, alternative solutions. If certain aspects of this budget people don't think work, provide us some ideas in terms of what you do. "Just say no" is the right advice to give your teenagers about drugs. It is not an acceptable response to whatever economic policy is proposed by the other party.

The American people sent us here to get things done. And in this moment of enormous challenge, they are watching and waiting for us to lead. Let's show them that we're equal to this task before us. Let's pass a budget that puts this Nation on the road to lasting prosperity. I know Kent Conrad is committed to doing that; John Spratt is committed to doing that; I'm committed to doing that. We're going to need everybody working together to get this thing done.

All right? Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:02 a.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. Kent Conrad, chairman, Senate Budget Committee; and Rep. John M. Spratt, Jr., chairman, House Committee on the Budget.

Remarks During a Meeting With Prime Minister Brian Cowen of Ireland and an Exchange with Reporters
March 17, 2009

President Obama. Hello, everybody. Happy St. Patrick's Day.

I just want to say that we are incredibly honored to have the *Taoiseach* here and his entire team. This is an affirmation of one of the strongest bonds between peoples that exist in the world. You know, when you think about the history of Ireland and the enormous impact it has had on our own history, and the fact that you've had people from Ireland who have shed blood on behalf of this country's independence and its freedom, that it has had probably as much impact on our culture and our traditions as any country on earth.

The bond and the friendship that is felt between the United States and Ireland is something that I think everybody understands, but as *Taoiseach* just mentioned, we can't take for granted and we have to continually build upon.

And so this visit gives us an opportunity to talk about some of the very important bilateral issues that we face, also to talk about some of the global issues that both the United States and Ireland want to take leadership in. We are grateful for the lasting friendship that exists between us.

I, personally, take great interest on St. Patrick's Day because, as some of you know, my mother's family can be traced back to Ireland, and it turns out that I think our first Irish ancestor came from the same county that *Taoiseach* once represented. So we may be cousins. [*Laughter*] We haven't sorted that through yet. But even if by blood we're not related, by culture and affinity, by friendship and mutual interest, we are certainly related. And this gives us an opportunity to just continue to strengthen the incredible bonds that we have between the two countries.

So thank you so much for visiting us.

The President's Visit to Ireland

Q. Will you visit—President, will you visit Offaly?

President Obama. I hope so.

Prime Minister Cowen. Well, can I first of all thank President Obama and Secretary of State and all his team for the wonderful welcome here to the White House. As President Obama has said, it's a great tradition here in the United States for a warm welcome for Ireland, and we deeply appreciate that welcome. And as I said, in area of contribution, since I came to America over this weekend, this relationship is based on substance, it's based on a very engaged America working with a contemporary, modern Ireland, helping to shape our history at home and helping us to contribute so much more by reason of our unity of purpose and our common values. And it is a great day for the Irish in America today, and I'm very conscious of that.

More than 44 million of our 70 million diasporas of the world are residing in the United States of America. And all of us, my own family, have reason to be very grateful to this country, and for what it's done down the generations further as we've progressed and, thankfully, go home and marry childhood sweethearts and end up with *Taoiseach* coming over here to meet a man whose forebears, as he said, was in my electoral district on one occasion. He said we're not related, and he looks forward coming to Offaly, the only thing I can say to him is he's not going to share a slate with me over there, because I can't compete with this man even in Offaly. [*Laughter*] But he would be very, very welcome.

And we look forward to an excellent discussion, as I said, on issues of mutual interest. And we are deeply grateful and appreciative of the wonderful access that our country is accorded on this great day for Ireland. And he reminds us, of course, that we are not simply an island nation, but a dispersed global family, and nowhere is that more celebrated than in this great country.

President Obama. Just one last point that I would like to make, and that is although I think it's wonderful that you visited the Oval Office and Washington, what you're really missing out on is the South Side Irish Parade in Chicago—[*laughter*]——

Prime Minister Cowen. I've been there.

President Obama. ——which I believe is one of the great events in America. And it is a lot of fun. Although as President I don't think I could have as much fun as I could before I was President at that parade, because I have press following me all the time.

But, anyway, welcome; thank you so much for being here. Thank you, guys; appreciate it. We got to get down to business.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:56 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Prime Minister Cowen referred to Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Remarks at a Saint Patrick's Day Shamrock Presentation Ceremony With Prime Minister Brian Cowen of Ireland
March 17, 2009

President Obama. Well, happy St. Patrick's Day to everybody. I want to welcome *Taoiseach* Brian Cowen and his lovely wife on their first visit to the White House for this wonderful St. Patrick's Day tradition. This is the first for both of us, and with a little bit of luck, I'm sure we'll get it right.

We are pleased to be joined by a statesman who worked as hard as anybody to usher in an age of peace in Northern Ireland, and that is my now Middle East envoy—because he's a glutton for punishment—Senator George Mitchell.

I am also proud today to announce that I am naming a great friend, Dan Rooney, cofounder of the Ireland Fund, unwavering supporter of Irish peace and culture and education—not to mention the owner of the Super Bowl champion Pittsburgh Steelers—as the United States Ambassador to Ireland. He will be an outstanding representative.

Just a private note here: Dan is a great friend. He and his family are as gracious and thoughtful a group of people as I know, and so I know that he is just going to do an outstanding job. And the people of Ireland, I think, will benefit greatly from him representing the United States there.

Now, before I turn it over to *Taoiseach*, it turns out that we have something in common. He hails from County Offaly. And it was brought to my attention on the campaign that my great-great-great- grandfather on my mother's side came to America from a small village in this county as well. We are still speculating on whether we are related. [*Laughter*]

I do share, though, a deep appreciation for the remarkable ties between our nations. I am grateful to him for his leadership of Ireland. The bond between our countries could not be stronger. As somebody who comes from Chicago, I know a little bit about Ireland, and the warmth, the good humor, and the fierce passion and intelligence of the Irish people is something that has informed our own culture as well. And so that's why this day and this celebration is so important.

So with that, what I'd like to do is let *Taoiseach* say a few words. And then I believe he's got something to give me.

Prime Minister Cowen. Well, thank you very much indeed. Mr. President; Secretary of State; Senators; distinguished Members of Congress; members of the Irish delegation; members of the press; ladies and gentlemen. It's, well—first of all, Mary and I would like to thank you, President and First Lady, for your very warm and gracious welcome to the White House this morning. Your invitation to me today and to

host this ceremony honors Ireland and all her people at home and abroad.

And I want to, in the first instance, greatly welcome your appointment of Dan Rooney, and we look forward to Dan and Pat coming to Ireland. They will be very welcome. They are regular visitors; they know Ireland so well. And Dan has been a great personal friend of mine down the years too, and I really very much welcome his appointment. And I know how great an honor it is for his family.

Can I say, Mr. President, you were saying you were trying to work out if we're related or not. I just want to say that I have checked, and unfortunately, there are no Kearneys on the electoral register anymore in my electoral district. [*Laughter*] But if there were, I assure you, I'd have them on my campaign team. [*Laughter*]

I hope, of course, some day to reciprocate your great hospitality by welcoming you and Mrs. Obama to Ireland, where we will offer you the warmest of Irish welcomes, I can assure you.

Mr. President, during your election campaign you captivated the hearts and minds of millions of people. On the island of Ireland, across Europe, and across the continent, indeed, your story and your message of hope were truly inspirational and universal in their appeal. We offer you our warmest congratulations, our good wishes, and our steadfast support.

Mr. President, St. Patrick's Day is a time of joy and pride for all Irish men and women everywhere. Today when Irish America is bound together by a green thread woven through the great cities and into the heartland and length and breadth of this great country, it is a day, too, of reflection on our immigrant history, of our sense of place and of our need to connect.

St. Patrick, of course, was an immigrant to our shores. He brought with him the great gift of faith, and in doing so he changed our country so much for the better. The Irish, in turn, brought this message of hope and his values of generosity around the globe, including to this great nation.

We are proud of our Irish community in America, of how they have preserved their Irish culture and heritage, and how they have helped build this great country. They have lived and worked here, and they have succeeded. They've enriched Ireland, and they have enriched America.

And on this St. Patrick's Day, in these most difficult times, we remember the enormous trials and deprivations experienced by our immigrant peoples in times past: times of poverty, oppression, and famine, indeed troubles on a scale unimaginable to us today. Their achievements inspire us with the strength of the human spirit and the certainty that we will succeed, and that we will manage our way together to safer and better economic times.

It is my firm conviction that America's leadership, your leadership, will be at the heart of that global resurgence. And every country has its own pressures and difficulties; we must each face up to them and to our own problems. But we also have to stand together in partnership. In Ireland you will find, Mr. President, the most steadfast of friends.

Time and again in our history, we have looked to America for leadership on the long and often difficult road to peace. At the darkest moments, the United States has been a constant source of hope, a reservoir of support, and a steady and trusted guide. The contribution of the United States has been immeasurable. And some of those who played a central role in our peace process are with us today, including your Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, and, of course, our dear friend, Senator George Mitchell. I wish them well in their work for peace in the Middle East. And I know that their work in Ireland will help to give them the strength and wisdom they will need in the months and years ahead.

We all know that the process of peacebuilding and of reconciliation takes patience and perseverance. In recent days, an evil, unrepresentative, and tiny minority has challenged the democratic institutions which we have built together in Ireland. The people of Ireland, north and south, have risen to that challenge. They have spoken with one voice. They have rejected violence and division. They have stood by peace, reconciliation, democracy, and freedom.

Mr. President, there is a phrase in the Irish language—"*Is feidir linn*"—it may seem familiar. It translates as "Yes you can." [*Laughter*] In that spirit, and in the spirit of friendship between our two countries, I am pleased to present you this bowl of shamrock.

I thank you once more for your kind welcome to the White House, and I wish a very happy St. Patrick's Day to you, to your family, and to the American people. Thank you very much.

President Obama. Well, the—let me try that again. *Is feidir linn*?

Prime Minister Cowen. Is feidir linn.

President Obama. Is feidir linn. All right. I got that. [*Laughter*] Yes we can.

I want to thank the *Taoiseach* and the people of Ireland for this beautiful bowl of shamrocks. Not only does it symbolize the deep and enduring bond between our peoples, but it serves as a hopeful reminder that whatever hardships the winter may bring, the eternal promise of springtime is always around the corner.

Now, the contributions of the Irish to the American story cannot be overstated. Irish signatures are on our founding documents; Irish blood has been spilled on our battlefields; Irish sweat went into building our greatest cities. We are better for their contributions to our democracy, and we are richer for their art and their literature, their poetry and their songs.

Rarely in world history has a nation so small had so large an impact on another. Tens of millions of Americans trace their roots back to the Emerald Isles, and on St. Patrick's Day, many millions more claim too. [*Laughter*] On behalf of them—[*laughter*]—and all Americans, I thank the Irish people for this gift and for all that they've contributed to the chronicles and the character of America.

And I do want to share briefly a few words about the recent attacks in Northern Ireland. Almost 11 years ago, the world watched with wonder as brave men and women found the courage to see past the scars of generations of violence and mistrust and come together around a future of peace. We watched with hope as the people of Ireland and Northern Ireland went to the ballot box and overwhelmingly endorsed such a peaceful future.

But every peace process is challenged by those who would seek to destroy it. And no one ever believed that this extraordinary endeavor would be any different. And we knew that there would be setbacks; we knew that there would be false starts. We knew that the opponents of peace would trot out the same old tired violence of the past in hopes that this young agreement would be too fragile to hold.

And the real question was this: When tested, how would the people of Northern Ireland respond? Now we know the answer: They've responded heroically. They and their leaders on both sides have condemned this violence and refrained from the old partisan impulses. They've shown they judge progress by what you build and not what you tear down. And they know that the future is too important to cede to those who are mired in the past.

The thoughts and prayers of Americans everywhere go out to the families of the fallen. And I want everyone listening to know this: The United States will always stand with those who work towards peace. After seeing former adversaries mourning and praying and working together this week, I've never been more confident that peace will prevail.

Now, today is a day for all the people of America and Ireland to celebrate our shared history and our shared future with joy and good cheer. So I can't think of a better place to take the *Taoiseach* for lunch than the Congress. [*Laughter*]

We'll be—[*laughter*]—that was good, wasn't it?

Prime Minister Cowen. That was good.

President Obama. You like that? [*Laughter*] We'll be heading there shortly for the annual Speaker's St. Patrick's Day luncheon, a tradition in which Democrats and Republicans put aside partisanship and unite around one debate only: who is more Irish than whom. [*Laughter*]

So I thanked the *Taoiseach* in advance for bringing relative peace to Washington for at least this day. [*Laughter*] Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:38 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Remarks at a Saint Patrick's Day Luncheon
March 17, 2009

Please, everyone, have a seat. Have a seat. Have another one of those cookies that's being passed around. [*Laughter*]

Speaker Pelosi, distinguished Members of the House and Senate, honored guests, the *Taoiseach* and his entire delegation, all the extraordinary leaders from Ireland, Northern Ireland, who are here: Thank you so much for joining us in this wonderful St. Patrick's Day tradition.

As Speaker Pelosi mentioned, this lunch was begun under Tip O'Neill and Ronald Reagan, two men of Irish stock who loved a good scrap, but who also knew how to work together to find common ground and to put the differences of the day aside in favor of laughter and good cheer at the end of the day.

In fact, looking at all of you, I'm reminded of a greeting President Reagan once offered the guests at this gathering. "On St. Patrick's Day," he said, "you should spend time with saints and scholars. So I have two more stops to make." [*Laughter*]

But it is—[*laughter*]—it is wonderful to see so many wonderful Irish Americans, as well as so many who wish they were. [*Laughter*]

People help you discover a lot about yourself when you're running for President. As has been mentioned, it was brought to my attention last year that my great-great-great-grandfather on my mother's side hailed from a small village in County Offaly.

Now, when I was a relatively unknown candidate for office, I didn't know about this part of heritage, which would have been very helpful in Chicago. [*Laughter*] So I thought I was bluffing when I put the apostrophe after the O. [*Laughter*] I tried to explain that "Barack" was an ancient Celtic name. [*Laughter*] *Taoiseach*, I hope our efforts today put me on the path of earning that apostrophe.

And of course, this St. Patrick's Day seems different than most because there's one person missing—as it's already been mentioned—one person who has touched all of us fortunate enough to walk these halls with his mentorship and his friendship, the hardest-working Irish American we know, friend to all, father to some: Teddy Kennedy. He sends his best, along with—[*applause*].

If I may speak seriously for a moment, earlier this morning, I mentioned briefly the recent attacks in Northern Ireland by those who would seek to challenge a hard-earned peace. And I told the *Taoiseach*, not all Americans are Irish, but all Americans support those who stand on the side of peace. And this peace will prevail.

This peace will prevail because the response of the people of Northern Ireland and their leaders to these cowardly attacks has been nothing short of heroic, true profiles in courage. They've condemned this violence, refrained from the old partisan impulses, made it absolutely clear that the future is too important to cede to those who are mired in the past. The sight of former adversaries mourning and praying and working together this week should inspire us all and strengthen our resolve to see that this peace does not falter.

And today we also reflect on the fact that the past and the future of our nations are forever intertwined. The Irish came to America with the dream of a better life, but they didn't just wait for somebody to hand it to them, they helped forge the very promise of America: that success is possible if you're willing to work hard for it.

Irish hands have signed our founding documents and fought in our wars. They've helped build our greatest cities. Through tragedy and triumph, despite bigotry and hostility, and against all odds, the Irish created a place for themselves in the American story. We are a nation blessed with so many immigrant and ethnic groups that have contributed to that story, and in doing so, they helped fashion a better life for all of us.

Now our challenge tomorrow, and in the months and years ahead, is to try and remember some of that spirit of this day, to work together with a renewed commitment to overcome the obstacles that stand in our way, and

toil just as passionately as our forebears to bring about a better life for all Americans.

And so to paraphrase some wise Irishman or woman, may we govern—may we who govern have the hindsight to know where we've been, the insight to know where we are, and the foresight to know where we are headed.

Taoiseach, thank you so much for being here, and your lovely wife and the entire delegation. Happy St. Patrick's Day to all of you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:27 p.m. at the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Brian Cowen of Ireland and his wife Mary. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Message to the Congress Certifying Exports to the People's Republic of China
March 17, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

In accordance with the provisions of section 1512 of the Strom Thurmond National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999 (Public Law 105–261), I hereby certify to the Congress that the export of fine grain graphite to be used for solar cell applications and for the fabrication of components used in electronic and semiconductor fabrication, and two dual-motor, dual-shaft mixers to be used to produce carbon fiber and epoxy prepregs for the commercial airline industry is not detrimental to the U.S. space launch industry, and that the material and equipment, including any indirect technical benefit that could be derived from these exports, will not measurably improve the missile or space launch capabilities of the People's Republic of China.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
March 17, 2009.

Remarks at a Saint Patrick's Day Reception
March 17, 2009

The President. Well, good evening, everybody.

Audience members. Good evening!

The President. And welcome to St. Patrick's Day at the White House. I notice that the Boston crowd is a little rambunctious tonight. How about Chicago? That's what I'm talking about. [*Laughter*] It seems particularly fitting that we gather tonight in a house that was, after all, designed and built by an Irish architect.

And we've had a wonderful day that began by meeting with a strong friend of the United States, *Taoiseach* Brian Cowen, who presented us with a gift of shamrocks from the people of Ireland, a symbol of the enduring ties between our nations and a reminder of the everlasting promise of spring. And I'm so glad that we've gotten a chance to know him and his lovely wife Mary, who've just been entirely gracious today. And we're very grateful to them. As it turns out, the *Taoiseach* and I have something in common—I've mentioned this in previous speeches—both he and my great-great-great-grandfather on my mother's side hail from County Offaly.

And I've also had the pleasure of meeting First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness of Northern Ireland, two men who have stood together to chart a historic path towards peace. They are with us tonight and deserve an extraordinary round of applause.

And I've just met with Sir Hugh Orde, the Chief Constable of Northern Ireland's Police Service, who is leading the efforts to bring those

responsible for the recent violence to justice. And we are grateful for him.

All of us have watched this week as the people of Northern Ireland and their leaders have responded, nothing short of heroically, to those who would challenge a hard-earned peace, and the thoughts and prayers of Americans everywhere are—go out to the families of the fallen. And I want everyone listening to know this: The United States of America will always stand with those who are working towards peace, and after seeing former adversaries mourning and praying and working together, I have never been more confident that this peace will prevail.

Today served as a solid reminder of just how deeply woven the ties between our two nations are. Irish signatures are on the founding documents; Irish blood has been spilled on our battlefields; Irish sweat went into the building of our greatest cities. Tens of millions of Americans now trace their roots back to that little island that has made such a large impact on America and on the world.

For generations, the Irish, along with so many other immigrant and ethnic groups, came to America equipped often with nothing but their faith and an unbending belief that success was possible for all who were willing to work for it. That, after all, may be the reason that Americans identify so strongly with the story of St. Patrick. It's the story of believing in the unseen and of making that belief a reality.

That's what the Irish did. They struggled to create a place for themselves in a distant land, and with a commitment to faith and family and hard work, they transformed that land in the process. And even after all the generations of becoming and being Americans, their descendants have never lost that enduring spirit that insists they proclaim themselves Irish still. That same pride was embodied by a man who once occupied this very house, a man who was only three generations removed from Ireland.

In the third year of his Presidency, John F. Kennedy decided to make a trip to his ancestral home. One of his aides advised against it, telling the President, "You've got all the Irish votes in the country that you'll ever get." [*Laughter*] "If you go to Ireland, people will say it's just a pleasure trip." [*Laughter*] And President Kennedy replied, "That's exactly what I want"—[*laughter*]—"a pleasure trip to Ireland." [*Laughter*]

And while there, he visited the port from which his great-grandfather embarked for America. And in an address to the Irish Parliament and Ireland's American-born President, he reflected, as we all have from time to time, on the role chance plays over the generations in determining who we become.

I want to read a quote from him. He said, "If this nation had achieved its present political and economic stature a century ago, my great-grandfather might never have left New Ross, and I might, if fortunate, be sitting down there with you," Kennedy said. "Of course, if your own President had never left Brooklyn, he might be standing up here instead of me." [*Laughter*]

It bears saying that if Patrick Kennedy hadn't left County Wexford, or if Thomas Fitzgerald hadn't left County Limerick, the American people might also have been denied one of the finest public servants of this or any age, Sir Edward M. Kennedy. Teddy Kennedy wishes he could be here tonight, but I guarantee this much: The very thought of all of you gathered here has his eyes smiling, and he expects you to party. [*Laughter*]

He has, as much as anyone, reminded us of what it means to be Irish: that no matter what hardships may come, there is always joy to be found in this life; and that through hard work, tomorrow can be better than any day; that comfort is found amidst faith and family, love and laughter, poetry and song.

And tonight, in this room with all of you, I'm reminded of the words of my favorite poet, Yeats: "There are no strangers here, only friends you haven't met yet."

Happy St. Patrick's Day, everybody. God bless you.

And with that, I would like to bring to the podium our honored guest for the evening, the *Taoiseach*, our outstanding Prime Minister of Ireland, Brian Cowen.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:34 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden.

Remarks at a Saint Patrick's Day Reception
March 17, 2009

The President. Thank you, thank you. Thank you so much. Good evening, everybody.

Audience members. Good evening!

The President. Welcome to St. Patrick's Day at the White House. And it seems particularly fitting that we gather tonight in a house that was, after all, designed and built by an Irish architect.

I want to thank Joe Biden and Jill Biden for being such great friends to Michelle and myself. And Joe is an outstanding Vice President. Jill instructs him on how to be an outstanding Vice President. [*Laughter*] And Joe's mother is just a sweetheart, and so her—you know, we're all thinking of her as she gets back on the mend.

We have had a wonderful day that began by meeting with a strong friend of the United States, *Taoiseach* Brian Cowen, who presented us with gifts of shamrocks from the people of Ireland, a symbol of the enduring ties between our nations, and a reminder of the everlasting promise of spring. And he also brought his wonderful wife Mary, and she has just been extraordinarily gracious. We are grateful to them. I was mentioning in the other room, it turns out that the *Taoiseach* and I have something in common. Both he and my great-great-great-grandfather—[*laughter*]—on my mother's side hail from County Offaly. My great-great-great-grandfather was a bootmaker there, apparently, and I have been adopted there. I understand that I have been invited to a pub there—[*laughter*]—to enjoy a pint there. [*Laughter*] And so we're going to take them up on that offer at some point.

Audience members. Hey!

President Obama. I also—you can tell these are my friends because they cheered about the pint. [*Laughter*] "Hey!" [*Laughter*]

Just a side note, you know, Guinness tastes very different in Ireland. It is much better. You guys are keeping the good stuff for yourself. It could start a trade dispute. [*Laughter*]

I also had the pleasure of meeting First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness of Northern Ireland, two men who have stood together to chart a historic path towards peace. And they are with us here tonight and deserve an extraordinary round of applause.

I've also met with Sir Hugh Orde, the Chief Constable of Northern Ireland's Police Services, who is leading the efforts to bring those responsible for the recent violence to justice. We've all watched this week as the people of Northern Ireland and their leaders have responded nothing short of heroically to those who would challenge a hard-earned peace, and the thoughts and prayers of Americans go out to the families of the fallen. And I want everyone who is listening to know this: that the United States of America will always stand with those who work towards peace. And after seeing former adversaries mourning and praying and working together, I have never been more confident that this peace will prevail.

Today serves, as well, as a solid reminder of just how deeply intertwined, how deeply woven the ties between our nations are. Irish signatures are on our founding documents; Irish blood has been spilled on our battlefields; Irish sweat went into building our greatest cities. Tens of millions of Americans now trace their roots back to that little island that has made such a large impact on America, and I include myself in that category.

For generations, the Irish, along with so many other immigrant and ethnic groups, came to America equipped often with nothing more than faith and an unbending belief that success was possible for all who were willing to work hard for it. And that, after all, may be the reason Americans identify so strongly with the story of St. Patrick, the story of believing in the unseen and of making that belief a reality.

And that's what the Irish did in this country. They struggled to create a place for themselves in a distant land. And with a commitment to faith and family and hard work, they transformed that land in the process. And even after all the generations of becoming and being Americans, their descendants have never lost the enduring spirit that insists on proclaiming themselves Irish still. That same pride was embodied by a man who once occupied this very house and whose portrait is right outside this door, a man who was only three generations removed from Ireland.

In the third year of his Presidency, John F. Kennedy decided to make a trip to his ancestral home. And one of his aides advised against it. The aide said, "You've already got all the Irish votes you want in this country." [*Laughter*] "If you go to Ireland, people will say it's just a pleasure trip." And Kennedy responded, "That's exactly what I want"—[*laughter*]—"a pleasure trip to Ireland." That's what I want too—[*laughter*]—but I'm not going to get one right now. We've got a little more work to do. [*Laughter*]

But while he was there, President Kennedy visited the port from which his great-grandfather embarked for America. And he addressed the Irish Parliament, and he reflected, as we all have from time to time, on the role chance plays over the generations in determining who we become.

And he said, "If this nation had achieved its present political and economic stature a century ago, my great-grandfather might never have left New Ross, and I might, if fortunate, be sitting down there with you," Kennedy said. "Of course, if your own President had never left Brooklyn, he might be standing up here instead of me." [*Laughter*]

Of course, it bears saying that if Patrick Kennedy hadn't left County Wexford, or if Thomas Fitzgerald hadn't left County Limerick, the American people would have been deprived of the Presidency of John F. Kennedy, but also would have been denied one of the finest public servants of this or any age, and a great friend of mine and many of yours, Sir Edward M. Kennedy.

Teddy wishes he could be here tonight, but I guarantee you this much: The very thought of all of you gathered here would put a twinkle in his eye and a smile on his face. He as much as anyone reminds us of what it means to be Irish: that no matter what hardships may come, there's always joy to be found in this life; that through hard work, tomorrow can be better than today; that comfort is found amidst faith and family, love and laughter, poetry and song.

And tonight, in this room with all of you, I am reminded of the words of that great Irish poet, Yeats: "There are no strangers here, only friends you haven't met yet."

Happy St. Patrick's Day, everybody. I'd like now to bring to the podium, the *Taoiseach* Brian Cowen.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:56 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Catherine E. "Jean" Biden, mother of Vice President Joe Biden. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on Departure for Costa Mesa, California, and an Exchange With Reporters

March 18, 2009

President Obama. We're about—I'm about to go to California, but I wanted to make sure that I had a chance to address all of you before we leave. And we're going to have a town hall meeting there in which we're going to be answering questions from voters about a whole host of issues.

Obviously, the whole issue of AIG and these bonuses that have been paid out have been consuming a lot of attention, and rightfully so,

because they represent what, I think, all of us consider an inappropriate use of taxpayer funds.

But what I think is also important and just as outrageous is the fact that we find ourselves in a situation where we're having to clean up after AIG's mess. And so I just had a meeting with my economic team, but also spoke with Chairman Barney Frank of the Financial Services Committee about the importance of giving ourselves tools to prevent ourselves from getting in a situation where an AIG can pose such enormous vulnerabilities to the system as a whole.

And what we are working on is a resolution authority that would be similar, not identical, but similar to the powers that the FDIC currently has over banks. What they're able to do is to, at the same time, protect creditors, depositors, and consumers, while also exercising greater power proactively over institutions like AIG—which is not a bank, which is an insurance company with a hedge fund on top of it—would allow us proactively to get out in front, make sure that we are separating out bad assets from good, dealing with contracts that may be inappropriate, and preventing the kinds of systemic risks that we've seen taking place with AIG.

So my economic team is going to be consulting with the Hill. We're going to be moving that on a fast track. This is part of the broader package of financial regulatory steps that we're going to be taking that ensures that going forward in the future we're not going to find ourselves in these kinds of terrible positions again.

One last point that I want to make. People are rightly outraged about these particular bonuses. But just as outrageous is the culture that these bonuses are a symptom of, that have existed for far too long, a situation where excess greed, excess compensation, excess risk-taking have all made us vulnerable and left us holding the bag. And one of the messages that I want to send is that as we get out of this crisis, as we work towards getting ourselves out of recession, I hope that Wall Street and the marketplace don't think that we can return to business as usual. The business models that created a lot of paper wealth but not real wealth in this country and have now resulted in crisis can't be the model for economic growth going forward.

And I've spoken before: We have to move beyond a constant bubble-bust mentality and start establishing a foundation for long-term economic growth. That involves making investments on health care and energy and education. That means increasing our productivity across sectors and not just relying on the financial sector for all our economic growth. It means that shareholders and boards of directors have to hold executives more accountable for their compensation scales.

The fact that these guys are looking for bonuses, having run down AIG, begs the question of, why were they making that much beforehand, when nobody was criticizing them, everybody thought they knew what they were doing. That kind of culture has to change. And I think that's what the American people are looking for. The financial regulatory package that we're designing, as well as the economic policies that we want to put in place are going to put an end to that culture. That's what we're striving for. That's what the American people are looking for, and working with Congress, that's what we're hoping to deliver.

All right? Thank you, guys.

Bonuses for American International Group (AIG) Executives

President Obama. I'll just take a couple of questions. Go ahead.

Q. Mr. President—[*inaudible*].

President Obama. We are exploring every possible avenue, as is Congress, to see what we can do. But what we need are tools that allow us not to find ourselves in a situation where we only have two options: One is to withhold money from AIG that could potentially lead them into a spiral that could affect the entire financial system, or, on the other hand, having folks get bonuses and at least have the capacity to sue the Government and get not only their bonuses but potentially even more out of the legal system. We've got to have tools that, under our legal authority, allows us to deal with these issues. That's what we're going to be striving for.

Government Oversight for American International Group (AIG) Bailout Funds

Q. Mr. President, do you wish that you had found out about these bonuses——

President Obama. I'm sorry?

Q. Do you wish that you would have found out about these bonuses a lot sooner than Thursday so you could have done something more then?

President Obama. Well, look, rather than going into sort of the details of finding it out, ultimately I'm responsible, I'm the President of the United States. We've got a big mess that we're having to clean up. Nobody here drafted those contracts. Nobody here was responsible for supervising AIG and allowing themselves to put the economy at risk by some of the outrageous behavior that they were engaged in. We are responsible though. The buck stops with me. And my goal is to make sure that we never put ourselves in this kind of position again.

Government Oversight for Bailout Funds

Q. Mr. President, a new round of bonuses and contracts are coming out. Did you—what did you say to the American public to quell the anger because people are angry about these new rounds—these new bonuses and contracts coming for AIG executives?

President Obama. Well, I don't want to quell anger. I think people are right to be angry. I'm angry. What I want us to do, though, is channel our anger in a constructive way. And the most important thing we can do right now is stabilize the financial system, get flowing—credit flowing again to businesses and consumers, and make sure that we change how these businesses operate so that they don't put us in a situation in which, when things go bad, the taxpayers have to foot the bill, and when things go good, folks are getting not just $6 million bonuses, but $30 or $40 million bonuses.

Now, keep in mind—I think it's very important to remind ourselves that there are a whole bunch of folks now who are feigning outrage about these bonuses that a year ago, or 2 years ago, or 3 years ago, said, "Well, we should never meddle in these compensation plans; these are the best and the brightest; they know what they're doing; that's part of the market." And now, suddenly they're outraged.

The point that I've been trying to make consistently has been that we believe in the free market, we believe in capitalism, we believe in people getting rich, but we believe in people getting rich based on performance and what they add in terms of value and the products and services that they create. And it's appropriate for us to have some regulatory mechanisms in place to ensure that we never have a situation where the Government has to step in, or you've got taxpayers who are having to foot the bill for other people's mistakes.

That requires some regulatory framework. And my hope is that one of the lessons we learn here is, is that putting smart regulations in place—oversight, transparency, accountability—those things are not anti-market, they're pro-market. When, last year, Barney Frank and I worked to allow shareholders to at least cast a non-binding vote on compensation packages, there were some people who attacked us saying government has no business doing that. Well, look, all we're trying to say is you've got to be accountable to somebody. And it's that measure of accountability that I think is part of what has made America strong, and we have to get back to those kinds of values.

All right? I'm going to make this—two more questions. Go ahead.

Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner

Q. You received $100,000 from AIG during——

President Obama. I'm sorry, I can't hear you.

Q. ——you received $100,000 from AIG during the campaign. How do you feel about those contributions today? Do you plan to do anything about it? And at least one Member of Congress has now called for your Secretary of the Treasury to resign. Your thoughts.

President Obama. Well, I have complete confidence in Tim Geithner and my entire economic team. Understand, as I said before, Tim Geithner didn't draft these contracts with

AIG. There has never been a Secretary of the Treasury, except maybe Alexander Hamilton, right after the Revolutionary War, who's had to deal with the multiplicity of issues that Secretary Geithner is having to deal with, all at the same time.

And he is doing so with intelligence and diligence. Nobody is working harder than this guy. He is making all the right moves in terms of playing a bad hand. And what we need to be doing is making sure that we are providing him the support that he needs in order to work through all these problems so that we're able to deal with them more effectively in the future.

All right, last—go ahead.

Government Bailout Funds/Financial Regulatory Reform

Q. Was it a mistake to prop up AIG? And if not, can you tell the American people why this company was so important to the economy that it had to be propped up and needs to be continued to be propped up going forward?

President Obama. Right. Well, look, this can get pretty technical, but I'll try to simplify it. Last year, when the Federal Reserve decided to step in—again, that wasn't a decision that we made, but I actually think it was the right decision—AIG had insured a whole bunch of losses for a whole bunch of banks that had made bad bets on subprime loans and mortgages that had been packaged and bundled up and made into securities.

These were massive insurance policies. Unfortunately, because of a lack of regulation, they were able to issue far more insurance policies than they could pay out on these various instruments that these banks had issued. And had AIG been allowed to simply liquidate and go bankrupt, all those banks who were counterparties with AIG would have experienced such big losses that it would have threatened the entire financial system.

I want to repeat something that I said before the joint session: My interest is not protecting banks. My interest is protecting the American people, the people's 401(k)s, ordinary folks who have a credit line with a bank for their small business, people whose pension funds are invested in some of these financial institutions. The prospect of all of that unraveling would have been unacceptable—an unacceptable risk.

Now, what we're trying to do is get ourselves in a position where we make sure that going forward we're not held hostage to all these bad decisions that were made by these huge institutions in the past, and that we create a system where they can't make all these bad bets, they can't issue these insurance policies one on top of the other without having the assets to back them up.

That's the kind of regulatory reform that we need. That's what these folks are going to be talking to the folks on the Hill about. And I am confident that we can strike the right balance that allows our financial system to stabilize, allows people to innovate in the financial markets, but don't allow them to put everybody else's savings, everybody else's well-being, other people's jobs, other people's homes at risk. And that's the task that lies before us and I'm confident with can get it done.

All right. Thanks, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:35 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Barney Frank, chairman, House Committee on Financial Services.

Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting and Question-and-Answer Session in Costa Mesa

March 18, 2009

The President. Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Everybody have a seat. We're going to be here a while. Well, thank you so much Orange County for the wonderful reception. Thank you.

First of all, let me thank Jerome for the wonderful introduction, give him a big round of applause. We've got a number of elected officials who are here, who I want to acknowledge. We've got the Lieutenant Governor, John

Garamendi, give the Lieutenant Governor a big round of applause. We've got the Secretary of Labor, Hilda Solis, who is here; got an outstanding Member of Congress, Representative Loretta Sanchez. Now, this is not Loretta's district, this is actually Dana Rohrabacher's district——

Audience members. Boo!

The President. No, no, no, we actually—our office screwed up and, I think, didn't get the invitation to him on time, so he's not here. No—it was a screw up on our part. So I want to let him know we're sorry about that, and I want everybody to give him a big round of applause; it's his district.

Secretary of state Debra Bowen is here. State comptroller John Chiang is here. Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell is here, and I've got a couple of others. We've got the mayor of Santa Ana, Miguel Pulido, who's here. We've got—let's see, who else? We have—State Senator Jose [Lou]* Correa is here. We have State Representative Jose Solorio here. We have—the State Democratic Party Chair Art Torres is here. And a great friend and supporter, Steve Westly is here. Give everybody a round of applause. I hope I did not miss anybody.

Now—and all of you are here, give yourself a big round of applause. All right. Now, let me just say that, for those of you who have chairs, go ahead and sit down so folks behind you can see. All right. Make sure to sit down if you've got a chair. We'll have time to shake hands afterwards.

Now, it is always good to get out of Washington for a little while and come to places like Costa Mesa. The climate is a lot nicer and so is the conversation. So I am looking forward to taking your questions in a few minutes and talking to you about your concerns. But before I do, I want to say a few words at the top. And I'm going to start out just by talking about these AIG bonuses you've been hearing about.

Now, I know a lot of you are outraged about this, rightfully so; I'm outraged too. It's hard to understand that a company that's relying on extraordinary assistance from taxpayers to keep its doors open would be paying anybody lavish bonuses. It goes against our most basic sense of what's fair and what's right; it offends our values. But these bonuses, outrageous as they are, are a symptom of a much larger problem, and that's the system and culture that made them possible, a culture where people made enormous sums of money taking irresponsible risks that have now put the entire economy at risk. So we're going to do everything we can to deal with these specific bonuses.

And I know Washington is all in a tizzy and everybody is pointing fingers at each other and saying it's their fault, the Democrats' fault, the Republicans' fault. Listen, I'll take responsibility; I'm the President. We didn't grant these contracts, and we've got a lot on our plate, but it is appropriate, when you're in charge, to make sure that stuff doesn't happen like this. So we're going to do everything we can to fix it. So for everybody in Washington who's busy scrambling, trying to figure out how to blame somebody else, just go ahead and talk to me, because it's my job to make sure that we fix these messes, even if I don't make them.

But what's just as important is that we make sure we don't find ourselves in this situation again, where taxpayers are on the hook for losses in bad times and all the wealth generated in good times goes to those who are at the very top of the income ladder. That's the kind of ethic we've had for too long. That's the kind of approach that led us into this mess. That is something we have to change if we're truly going to turn our economy around and move this country forward.

So I'm absolutely committed to ensuring that we have the tools we need to prevent the kinds of abuses that sent AIG spiraling. And we've got to make sure that we've got regulations that don't allow companies to take these huge risks that are so big that they can sort of hold us hostage. We can't let them fail because it would bring the entire banking system down and hurt a lot of innocent people, but on the other hand, they act irresponsibly. We have to

* White House correction.

make sure we don't put ourselves in that position.

And I'm also committed to ensuring that if we ever do have to intervene again to prevent a bankruptcy that could cause catastrophe for the whole financial system, then we have some of the tools that a bankruptcy judge has to help renegotiate contracts, to sell off insolvent parts of an institution, to protect the healthy parts, to protect depositors and creditors and other consumers.

We also want to do this because it serves the most important goal we have today, which is to rebuild our economy in a way that's consistent with our values, an economy—and I want to describe to you the kind of economy that we want to build: an economy that rewards hard work and responsibility, not high-flying financial schemes; an economy that's built on a strong foundation, but not one that's propelled by overheated housing markets and maxed-out credit cards. In other words, we want to build an economy that offers prosperity for the long run. You remember that ad that they used to have out there that said, "We earn money the old-fashioned way; we earn it." Well, we need to get back to that philosophy, because that's what all of you do. You're out there earning a living, and we've got to reward people who are working hard, not the bubble-and-burst economy we've experienced in recent years.

We don't need these house of cards, these Ponzi schemes, even when they're legal, where a relatively few do spectacularly well while the middle class loses ground. You know what I'm talking about. I don't need to tell you these are challenging times. I don't need to tell you this because you're living it every day. One out of every 10 Californians is out of work right now. You've got one of the highest foreclosure rates in the Nation. Budget cuts are threatening the jobs of thousands of teachers across the State.

But here's what I know—here's what I want you to know: We are not only going to make it through this crisis, we are going to come out on the other side a stronger and more prosperous nation. I can't tell you how long it's going to take or what obstacles we'll face along the way, but I can promise you this, there will be brighter days ahead, here in California and all across America. But that's only going to happen if we pull together and focus on the big things, focus on the long term. We've got to get past this petty bickering, the constant trivialization of politics, and focus on getting the job done.

And we're already—we're seeing signs of progress. Because of the Recovery Act that your two outstanding Senators, Senator Feinstein and Senator Boxer, along with Congresswoman Sanchez, worked so hard to pass and that I signed into law the other week, a new hospital will be built at Camp Pendleton that will give our service men and women the care they deserve.

Over in Inglewood, the police department is planning to expand its staff by 30 people. Orange County is hoping to add a new lane on SR–91, creating about 2,000 jobs and easing congestion in the process. These are just a few of the 396,000 jobs we will create or save in California, and the 3.5 million jobs we'll create or save across America over the next 2 years.

We are also taking unprecedented steps to unlock our frozen credit markets so families can get the loans they need to buy a home or a car and businesses can pay for inventory or make payroll. That's why earlier this week, we took a sweeping step to free up loans for entrepreneurs, helping them start and grow the small businesses that employ half of our private-sector workers. That's why we're creating a fund that will help support up to $1 trillion in loans, including auto loans and college loans. That's why we've launched a housing plan that will help responsible homeowners save money by refinancing their mortgage loans.

Now, none of this will make any difference, however, unless we strengthen our economy over the long term, unless we put our economy on a firmer footing by rebuilding its foundation. And that's exactly the purpose of the budget I'm submitting to Congress. It's a budget that makes hard choices about where to save and where to spend. Because of the massive deficit we inherited and the costs of this financial crisis, we are going through our books line by line so that we can cut our deficit in half by the end of my first term and reduce it by $2 trillion over the next decade. Now, what we will not cut—what we will not cut—are investments

that will lead to real growth and real prosperity, investments that will make a difference in the lives of this generation and future generations.

Let me give you some examples. Because of spiraling health care costs that are crushing our families, dragging down our entire economy, and represent one of the fastest growing parts of our Federal and State budgets, we've made a historic commitment to health care reform in this budget, reform that brings us closer to the day when health care is affordable and accessible for every single American.

Because we know that countries that outeducate us today will outcompete us tomorrow, this budget invests in a complete and competitive education for every American, in early childhood education programs that work, in high standards and accountability in our schools, in finally putting the dream of a college degree or technical training within reach for anyone who wants it.

Because we know that enhancing America's competitiveness will also require reducing our dependence on foreign oil and building a clean energy economy, this budget will spark the transformation we need to create green jobs and launch renewable energy companies right here in California. It makes clean energy the profitable kind of energy. It invests in technologies like wind power and solar power and fuel-efficient cars and trucks powered by batteries like the ones I'll be seeing in Rosemead tomorrow, all of which will also help combat climate change, because the weather is already nice in Orange County; we don't want it to get warmer.

So that's what this budget does. Now, here's what it does not do.

Audience member. We love you, Obama!

The President. I love you back.

Here's what the budget does not do. It does not raise the taxes of any family making less than $250,000 a year by a single dime. In fact, 95 percent of all working families will receive a tax cut as a result of our recovery plan. Now, there are those who say these plans are too ambitious; we should be trying to do less not more. "Obama is trying to do too much," they say. "Just focus on Wall Street, focus on the banks."

Audience members. No!

The President. Well, I say our challenges are too large to ignore. The cost of health care is too high to ignore. The dependence on oil is too dangerous to ignore. Our education deficit is too wide to ignore. To kick these problems down the road for another 4 years or 8 years, that would be to continue the same irresponsibility that got us to this point. I didn't run for President to pass on our problems to the next generation or the next President. I ran for President to solve these problems so that you've got a better shot at life.

Audience members. Obama! Obama! Obama!

The President. So I know folks in Washington and folks on Wall Street are saying, no, no, no, one problem at a time—our problems. [*Laughter*] I understand the thinking behind that, and it's true, we've got to solve this banking crisis. There's no doubt about it. Not because I'm that concerned about the bankers, but because I'm concerned about you. And we've got to get liquidity and credit flowing again to small businesses, to people who want to buy a car or who want to refinance a home. So I understand their thinking about solving that problem. But, you know, I've said before, when you're President, you've got to walk and chew gum at the same time.

It would be nice if I could just pick and choose what problems to face and when to face them, and say, no, I'm sorry, hold off on health care; Afghanistan, let's put that aside for a while. You know, I would sleep a little easier. But that's not the way it works. It doesn't work that way for you. It doesn't work that way for you. You don't get to choose between paying your mortgage bills or your medical bills. You don't get to choose between paying your kids' tuition and saving enough for retirement. You don't get to say, "Well, I'm sorry, hold on a second, you know, I really got to take on some issues at home here so I don't think I'm going to go to work for a week." It would be nice to do, but you don't do that. You need to take all these problems on. And you need a government that's going to help you on

all these problems, that will do the same. That's what leadership is all about.

And that's what this debate on the budget is all about—about whether we are willing to do what needs to be done not only to get our economy moving right now, but to put it on the road to lasting, shared prosperity. It can be easy to lose sight of this. It's easy for pundits to get on TV and put their ratings ahead of their own sense of responsibility and try to oversimplify what's at stake. It can be difficult to break free from the partisanship that's held sway in Washington for so many years. But that's what we have to do; that's what this moment requires.

For all of you know deep down—and what folks in Washington sometimes forget—in the end, a budget is not merely numbers on a page or a laundry list of programs. It's about your lives; it's about your families; it's about your dreams for the future. You did not send us to Washington to stand in the way of your aspirations. You didn't send us there to say no to change. You sent us there to get things done and bring about change, and that's what I intend to do. But I can't do it without you. I can't do it without you, the American people. That's why I'm here today, because it will take all of us talking with one another and all of us working together to see our Nation through this difficult time and bring about that brighter day. So I hope you're all ready to get to work.

I want to thank you all for this opportunity to speak with you. Here's what we're going to do. We're going to open it up to questions. And I know there are a lot of folks back there too, so I'm going to try not to completely discriminate to the folks who got here in front. There are no rules to this, except a couple. [*Laughter*] First of all, this—nobody has been preselected here, so, you know, I don't mind if you want to take me to task. If you think I'm a bum and doing a bad job, you go ahead and ask your question.

The only thing I'd ask is everybody raise their hands, number one—not everybody now, I mean everybody who has a question. [*Laughter*] Number two is that I'm going to go girl, boy, girl, boy, so it's fair. [*Laughter*] Number three, I would ask that everybody try to keep their question relatively brief so that we can get as many questions in as possible. Now, it doesn't have to be a question, it can be a comment as well, but, you know, we want to try to keep the speeches to a minimum. And I will try to also answer questions as briefly as possible.

Okay? All right. And I hope you don't mind, I'm going to take off my jacket. If you guys are hot—[*applause*]. I'm hot. Okay. Thanks, Mike. All right. We're going to call on this young lady right here. And wait till you get a microphone so everybody can hear you. Introduce yourself if you can.

2012 Presidential Election

Q. Good afternoon, President Obama. My name is Mrs. Victoria Ravon-Woodbirth, and I have a very simple question. Do you have intentions of, when the reelection comes, of running for President again?

The President. Oh, well, the—first of all, let me say this: I've been in office for 2 months now; the last thing I'm thinking about is reelection. But I will tell you this—I mean—and this is a serious answer to your question: If I could get done what I think needs to get done in 4 years, even if it meant that I was only President for 4 years, I would rather be a good President taking on the tough issues for 4 years than a mediocre President for 8 years.

So I will—and I will also say this, that my obligation is to make sure that we've improved our economy, that we've gotten serious on health care, made significant progress on energy, made education more affordable, and improved the excellence of our educational system K–12, that we have started controlling our deficits.

So there's some very specific standards by which I think you should hold me accountable and measure my success. And if I don't deliver on those things 4 years from now, then I think you will be answering the question of whether I run for reelection or not, because ultimately I'm answerable to you; I'm your employee. Okay?

All right, the gentleman in the black shirt right here.

Economic Stabilization Funds

Q. Mr. President.

The President. Yes, sir.

Q. My name is Cliff Cannon. My question concerns those States who have refused to take certain portions of the stimulus money. Is there any way to reallocate that money to those States who are willing recipients—[*laughter*]—such as California?

The President. Well, look, we had a vigorous debate on the stimulus, on the Recovery Act, and let me just say a couple of things about the Recovery Act. Number one, there was almost uniform consensus among both conservative and liberal economists that when you have the economy on such a free-fall, that you need a big stimulus to try to make sure that goods and services are still being purchased, and that the decline in demand, as consumers pull back, is being filled. If you don't, then the recession gets even worse. There's almost uniform consensus on it. So that's point number one.

Point number two: The Recovery Act that we put forward contained some provisions in it that I don't think anybody should be able to argue with—that we're providing extended unemployment insurance to people who have lost their jobs; that we are allowing—if you've lost your job, right now you can get COBRA, but you can't afford COBRA—so subsidizing health insurance for people who have lost their jobs, investing in our roads and our bridges and our infrastructure, so that we are more competitive over the long term.

Now, there are some people—there have been just a handful of States, two or three, who have said, "We don't want to take some of the unemployment insurance." Because what we said was that a portion of this unemployment insurance—you have to make it more available to people who are temporary workers or part-time workers because the labor force has changed and there are a lot of people, particularly women, who, you know, they may have children, they may be working part-time, but when they lose that job it's tough for them. So we've got to modify how we think about unemployment insurance, and they said, "Well, we don't want to change how we do things." I think that's a mistake, and I think that the folks in those States should let them know that it's a mistake. And I'm still hopeful that they may end up changing their minds. But I will keep in mind what you just said, which is there's at least one guy in California who's willing to take the money. So—[*applause*].

Can I make one last point? I hope you don't mind. Can I make one last point about this stimulus package? I want to make a larger point about the deficit and the national debt, because the main argument that you're hearing right now in opposition to some of our economic plans, including our budget, is you've got all this money going out, you're creating huge deficits and debt, and that's irresponsible.

Well, first of all, most of these critics presided over a doubling of the national debt. We are inheriting a $1.3 trillion deficit. So they don't have the standing to make this criticism, I think, given how irresponsible they've been. That's point number one. Having said that, even somebody who caused the problem isn't wrong when they say it is a problem that we've got this big debt and these big deficits.

So what we've tried to do is to say, let's, right now, just focus on getting the economy back on track, reducing unemployment, creating jobs, making sure our school systems still have teachers, cops are still on the streets, firefighters are still in the station house. Let's do what we need to do to get through this difficult time. Let's make some investments in health care, energy, education that will lay the foundation for long-term economic growth. But let's also start making some tough choices about the deficit as soon as we get out of this recovery.

So for example, we can't keep on providing the insurance companies huge subsidies under Medicare for a program called Medicare Advantage that doesn't make our seniors any healthier than the regular Medicare plan. We need to go ahead and use that money for other things.

We can't keep on giving these huge procurement contracts to defense industries that end up being 50, 60, 100 percent over budget—very good for contractors, not so good for taxpayers. So we've got to institute reforms, and we've already identified potentially pulling $40 billion out annually in savings on procurement.

Those are the kinds of things—those are the kinds of steps that we need to take. And we are going to go through this budget line by line, and some of these choices may be difficult. I won't lie to you; we can't keep on just printing money and saying we'll let our children worry about it. But we have to do it in a way that right now focuses on just getting people back on their feet, getting the economy running again. And then we're going to have to make some difficult choices, especially over some of these longer term entitlements like Social Security and Medicare.

All right, this young lady right here. Hold on a second, we've got a mike right here, right in front.

Small Business Administration Loans/Lines of Credit

Q. Thank you. Hello, Mr. President.

The President. Hello.

Q. My name is Joan Earheart, and I'm a community bank SBA lender and have proudly been one for 20 years. We're very, very excited about the stimulus package, and we are going to do everything we can to get the money out there, including financing the construction projects that you're talking about. However, as a lender and as a bank, we have a problem that I feel needs to be addressed. When we make loans that are less than the normal quality, even with the SBA guarantee, the regulators tend to criticize us. And when they criticize us, they make us set aside reserves as if the loan is going to be bad, and that eats into our capital. That's part of the problem that banks are having right now and why they needed the TARP money. Not all banks are bad banks, as you know, and as a community bank that's been around for 85 years, we haven't even taken TARP money. We want to make SBA loans, but we don't want to get our hands slapped by the regulators when we try to help these people. And last year is going to be a less than stellar tax return for everybody that's had a problem, that is going to come to the SBA for help.

Will you be able to speak with the regulators and set some kind of new bar so that we won't be criticized, and we can actually go out and loan this money that we want to?

The President. Well, you make a terrific point. This is a excellent point. Let me say a couple of things on this. First of all, just so everybody caught the issue here, there are a lot of community banks, smaller banks, local banks that did not act irresponsibly. They weren't involved in, you know, buying some of these weird financial instruments that didn't work; they're not paying out the $100-million bonuses. You don't look like you got a $5-million bonus. [*Laughter*] You wish, right? Yes, they're working with local businesses, small businesses, small contractors. They take in deposits; they do what banks are supposed to do.

They're still having some problems—local community banks—and they're having some problems in two areas. Number one is, a lot of these community banks give Small Business Administration loans, SBA loans, that are guaranteed by the Federal Government, but the problem is, is that historically what they've done is they get the loans and then they sell them on what's called the secondary market. They sell them to other parties who invest in these loans. The problem is all these secondary markets have all frozen up right now because everybody is so nervous about all these losses that have been happening on Wall Street.

So we just announced this week a program that will allow the Treasury Department to buy these loans directly from the community banks, so if you've got $5 million worth of loans, SBA loans, already on the books, you can sell them to Treasury. That will then mean that you'll have $5 million that you can now put back to work providing loans without worrying about your capital—your capital ratios. So that's—so we'll—you should find out—this is on our web site, the White House web site; it will tell you about this program.

Now, you're right, though, we still have a problem that a lot of small businesses are seeing their credit lines restricted. And part of that has to do with the issue you're talking about, which is regulators may be saying to banks, look, we're worried about all these losses, so pull back on what you consider riskier loans. Well, if you've got a credit line to a small business, and they're seeing some of their business dry up right now,

then you might be saying to yourself, maybe I can't continue that credit line.

We don't have direct authority—the White House does not have direct authority over these regulators. These regulators are supposed to be somewhat independent from politics. But, you know, we have had conversations to note that during a difficult period like this, we want to make sure that the bottom line is ultimately that liquidity and lending is going out the door. And I think that we're going to be having broader conversations with the community banks to figure out how can we take even further steps to help them be in a position to help the small businesses and individuals who depend so much on banks like yours. Okay?

All right, this young man right here. This young man right here. He's been——

Audience member. Come on back here next time.

The President. Okay. [*Laughter*] See, I'll admit that part of the reason—[*laughter*]—it's just—I'm getting old, and it's hard to see you guys back there. [*Laughter*] Go ahead.

Immigration Reform

Q. My name is Ivan Martinez. I'd like to ask you what are you planning to do on immigration, the broken system that we have? And when do you plan on doing this?

The President. I just met with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus today—which Congresswoman Sanchez is a member of—to talk about this issue directly. As many of you know, during the campaign I was asked repeatedly about this, and I reiterated my belief that we have to have comprehensive immigration reform.

Now, I know this is an emotional issue; I know it's a controversial issue; I know that the people get real riled up politically about this, but ultimately, here's what I believe: We are a nation of immigrants, number one. Number two, we do have to have control of our borders. Number three, that people who have been here for a long time and put down roots here have to have some mechanism over time to get out of the shadows, because if they stay in the shadows, in the underground economy, then they are oftentimes pitted against American workers. Since they can't join a union, they can't complain about minimum wages, et cetera, they end up being abused, and that depresses the wages of everybody, all Americans.

So I don't think that we can do this piecemeal. I think what we have to do is to come together and say, we're going to strengthen our borders. And I'm going to be going to Mexico; I'm going to be working with President Calderon in Mexico to figure out how do we get control over the border that's become more violent because of the drug trade. We have to combine that with cracking down on employers who are exploiting undocumented workers. We have to make sure that there's a verification system to find out whether somebody is legally able to work here or not. But we have to make sure that that verification system does not discriminate just because you've got a Hispanic last name or your last name is Obama. [*Laughter*]

You've got to—and then you've got to say to the undocumented workers, you have to say, "Look, you've broken the law; you didn't come here the way you were supposed to, so this is not going to be a free ride. It's not going to be some instant amnesty. What's going to happen is you are going to pay a significant fine. You are going to learn English. You are going to—you are going to go to the back of the line so that you don't get ahead of somebody who was in Mexico City applying legally. But after you've done these things over a certain period of time you can earn your citizenship," so that it's not—it's not something that is guaranteed or automatic. You've got to earn it, but over time you give people an opportunity.

Now, it only works though if you do all the pieces. I think the American people, they appreciate and believe in immigration. But they can't have a situation where you just have half a million people pouring over the border without any kind of mechanism to control it. So we've got to deal with that at the same time as we deal in a humane fashion with folks who have put down roots here, have become our neighbors, have become our friends, they may have children who are U.S. citizens. That's the

kind of comprehensive approach that we have to take. All right. Okay.

All right, I promised to go back there. I promised to go back there, but I can't see anybody, so—but it's a girl's turn; it's a lady's turn. There's a whole bunch of folks just kind of waving. One young woman from the back, just go ahead and—somebody with a mike go find somebody. There you go. I can't see.

Education Reform

Q. Thank you. Hi, my name—oops, that's really loud. My name is Isa, and I'm a teacher in Santa Ana. Thank you. And I got my RIF notice on Saturday and——

The President. You got—I'm sorry, you got what notice?

Q. My RIF notice, which is I'm going to be—the intention to be laid off.

The President. A pink slip?

Q. Yes, a pink slip. That's why it went pink. My question is—oh, I'm so nervous, okay. Thank you for coming.

The President. You're doing great.

Q. I just love you. Okay. Our class sizes are between 36 and 44. This is normal. I've been in the district for over 25 years. I have seen what our kids can do when someone cares. The Teacher of the Year also received a pink slip. We're talking about quality teachers being laid off because of something—I don't know what. Tomorrow we have a meeting.

My next—my real question is, you have put money towards retention; how are we going to make sure that money comes to our districts that need it the most, the urban districts?

The President. Well, look, we—most of—almost all of the money that's going to States under the Recovery Act for education is designed to retain teachers. Almost—the lion's share of it, I mean, there's some money for school construction as well, and there's some money for innovation, because we can't just put more money into the schools without also reforming the schools and making them better.

But a huge—right now the biggest chunk is for teacher retention. It generally flows in the same way the title I monies flow, so that there should be a formula that the States are working with in terms of how it's allocated to various districts. I don't know the exact figures here in California or what would happen in terms of this school district. Your school superintendent is here though. There he is right here.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Wait, wait, wait, wait. Hold on a second. Hold on. Hey, hold on a second. It's not his fault that the State has run out of money. So he is going to—he was in a meeting with Arne Duncan, our Secretary of Education, and I stopped by in the meeting—and these were the school superintendents for all across the country, to come together and work on how do we both deal with the immediate short-term crisis, but also, how do we think about long-term reforms?

You're right that class size is something that we've got to deal with. You can't have a fifth grade class with 40 kids. There's no teacher who can deal with 40 kids all at the same time, especially if many of them are at different levels in terms of reading and math skills and so forth. So we've got to do something about that.

But what's also true, though, is we've got to provide better teacher training. There are teachers who may not know their subject matter as well as they should. They've got to be given more time to—for professional development. We've got to have more flexibility, I believe, in terms of how we reward teachers. I think that it is important for us to make sure that we have assessments that everybody can agree, because, ultimately, we've got to know that our kids are meeting high standards.

Now, it can't just be a single high-stakes standardized test, but we do need to have strong, powerful measures of performance, because schools are like anything else. We can't afford our kids to be mediocre at a time when they're competing against kids in China and kids in India who are actually in school about a month longer than our kids. So there's a whole bunch of reforms that we're going to have to do.

And the last point that I always make—so I'll make this again—is we've got to do our jobs as parents. You can't put all the burden on a teacher. [*Applause*] You can't put all the burden on a teacher. If you're not making sure your child does their homework, if you're not reading to them, instilling a sense of excellence and a thirst

for knowledge in them, then they're not going to do very well, no matter how good your teacher is. Okay, so that's very important.

One last point I want to make about education. This budget that we are now arguing about—and you're going to be hearing a bunch of arguments about, oh, you know, Obama, he's a spendthrift, et cetera, et cetera—we reduce nondefense discretionary spending as a percentage of gross domestic product, but what we insist on is that we make some investments in education.

And I haven't—and one of the things that we haven't talked about is higher education. I've said we've got to increase student loans, student grants, the Pell grant program. That's got to be a priority. That's our future, and I'm going to fight for it. I don't care how long it takes; we're going to make it more affordable to go to college, because that's what everybody needs.

All right, we need a gentleman. Gentleman in the tie right here. Since he wore a tie today, I appreciate that. [*Laughter*]

The Middle Class/National Economy

Q. It's awful hot.

The President. It's hot. I want to take mine off too, but I——

Q. I'm Bob Balgenorth. I'm president of the State Building and Construction Trades Council of California, the umbrella organization for construction unions. I would like to thank you for your leadership on the stimulus package and particularly for trying to get construction workers back to work.

But during the last 8 years, the administration chose not to enforce the Davis-Bacon requirements, chose not to enforce wage and hour conditions, and many thousands of workers were denied the wages that they were legally entitled to. What can your administration do to make sure that people get the wages that they're entitled to in this terrible economic downturn?

The President. Well, look, I have already said that we are going to promote Davis-Bacon. We think it is important that unions have the opportunity to organize themselves.

Now, you know, sometimes, you know, the business press says, oh, that's anti-business. And whenever I hear that I'm always reminded of what Henry Ford said when he first started building the Model T, and he was paying his workers really well. And somebody asked him, they said, "Why are you paying your workers so well?" He said, "Well, if I don't pay them well, they won't be able to buy a car."

Think about that. Part of the problem that we've had with our economy over the last decade at least is that—well, there are a number of problems. Number one, it turns out that a huge amount of the growth that was claimed was in the financial services industry. And now we find out that a bunch of that stuff was just a paper growth that wasn't real and vanished as soon as somebody pulled the curtain.

Another part of the problem with our economy and the way it was growing was that wages and incomes for ordinary working families were flat for the entire decade. Now, I don't need to tell you this, because you've experienced it in your own lives. You're just barely kept up with inflation while people at the very top—and look, I'll be honest with you, I'm now in that category—we were seeing all the benefits.

So when I say that we should make it easier for unions to organize and observe Davis-Bacon, all I'm trying to do is to restore some balance to our economy so that middle class families who are working hard—they're not on welfare; they're going to their jobs every day; they're doing the right thing by their kids—they should be able to save, buy a home, go on a vacation once in a while. You know, they should be able to save for retirement, send their kids to college. That's not too much to ask for; that's the American Dream. And the only way we get there is if we have bottom-up economic growth instead of top-down economic growth. And that's why—that's why the debate about this budget is so important.

Let's talk tax policy for a second, because, again, some on the other side have said, oh, Obama, he's a tax-and-spend Democrat—tax and spend. Well, it turns out, yes. You know, what I've said is we should return to the tax

rates that we had under Bill Clinton, which means this—which means that for people who are making more than $250,000 a year, they would pay—instead of 36 percent, they'd pay 39 percent, it's like a 3 percent increase on their tax rate.

Now, these folks can afford it. They were rich back in the nineties. It's not like suddenly they're going to have to go to the poor house. But what that does is it allows us to pay for health care reform for a lot of people who are out there working every day but are just one illness away from bankruptcy.

Now, that's—I don't think that's unreasonable. I don't think that's socialism. I think that's part of understanding that we're all in this together and that if the middle class is working well, if working people are doing well, then everybody does well. Then they can buy products and services and businesses will succeed. That's the philosophy that we are pursuing in this budget; that's why I need your support.

I'm going to take two more questions, two more questions. Back here, because everybody—these folks have been in the lights, so they're really hot. So we got to make sure that—anybody got a mike back here? No? No mikes over here? All these folks can't just be props back here, just sitting here. [*Laughter*] You got to give them a little love.

All right, it's a lady's turn. And we have so many nice ladies here. I feel—eeny, meeny, miney—I'm going to call on this young lady in the green right here. Go ahead, yes.

Credit Cards/Stemming the Financial Crisis

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President.

The President. Yes.

Q. Thank you for taking my question. This is amazing.

The President. Of course.

Q. Since the American taxpayers have had to bail out a lot of large banks—Citibank, et cetera—and they don't feel they've gotten any benefit for themselves, do you support caps on the interest rates that the same companies we have bailed out with our money can charge regular consumers on credit cards, because it's up to 30 and 40 percent?

The President. It's a great question. It's a great question. This was a really good question. First of all, I generally support a credit card bill of rights, even—setting aside the whole issue of TARP and who's been getting TARP and who hasn't been getting TARP. The truth of the matter is that the banking industry has used credit cards and pushed credit cards on consumers in ways that have been very damaging.

There's a woman named Elizabeth Warren who's a professor at Harvard who did a great deal of study around this. And she made a simple point. You know, if you bought a toaster, and the toaster blew up in your face, there would be a law—a consumer safety law that would protect you from buying that toaster. But if you get a credit card that blows up in your face, that starts off at zero-percent interest, and once they kind of suck in the—buying a bunch of stuff and suddenly it's 29 percent; and if you're late 2 days, suddenly, you know, you just paid another $30, and all kinds of fine print that a lot of folks didn't understand—well, somehow that's okay. So just putting aside the issue of TARP, I think, generally, having some consumer safety, some consumer protection around credit cards, is important.

Now, all of us—I think a lot of people have learned their lesson with credit cards. And credit cards can be an important convenience, but generally speaking, if you're just running up your credit card and you don't think that there's a bill to be paid, you've got problems. So all of us, I think, have to be more thoughtful about how we use them, and, ultimately, we've got to take responsibility if we are going on shopping sprees that we can't afford. On the other hand, it's also important that we have consumer safety laws, and that's something that I want to promote and get done as President of the United States.

Now, let me talk about the larger issue of banks just for a second, because a lot of people, I know, just are so frustrated, and I am so frustrated with this banking situation. I just want to just briefly explain to you sort of what's happened.

These banks purchased a lot of what are securitized mortgage instruments. They took a lot of these subprime loans and they bundled them

up, so they weren't just holding a mortgage, they were holding a whole bundle of mortgages that were made into a security, a stock. And they were sliced up, and so you could buy different pieces of these mortgages. And unfortunately, what ended up happening was a bunch of these mortgages—and this was certainly true in California, it was true all across the country—a bunch of these mortgages were based on people who never had the income to buy the house. Nobody tried to verify whether or not they could actually afford it; it was based on these complicated mathematical formulas.

And then what happened—and this is where AIG and some other companies come in—what happened was, since the banks knew that there might be some risk around having these financial instruments, they bought these things called credit default swaps that were supposed to be guarantees or insurance on these instruments—on these securities, these mortgage-backed securities.

The problem was, companies like AIG, they'd sell, like, 50 policies without having the money to cover the possibility that they would all go belly-up. So they were way overleveraged, overextended, just as the banks were way overleveraged and overextended. And in some cases they'd take a dollar worth of assets and they'd loan or use $30 off that one dollar, just to make bigger and bigger bets and take bigger and bigger risks out in the financial system. And these started getting into trillions of dollars.

And as long as nobody was checking to see if anybody was going to be able to pay back these mortgages and as long as housing prices were appreciating and this housing bubble was continuing, everybody was making a lot of money. So nobody wanted to check, and there was no serious regulation to say, hold on, stop a minute, you guys are getting way overextended; you're putting the entire financial system at risk.

So when the economy started slowing down—and in some markets like Miami and here in California, the housing market starts really weakening—and suddenly some of these subprime loans start defaulting, this whole house of cards just began to collapse.

Now, a lot of people say, well, why not just let the banks fail? Right? See, somebody is clapping. Why not just, you know—they were making all these bad bets; why don't we just let them fail, let them go bankrupt? What's the problem?

Well, here's the problem. If you've just got one small bank—I mean, unfortunately—let's take the community bank—what's the name of your community bank? Fullerton Community Bank. All right, now, let's just say this: If Fullerton Community Bank fails, heaven forbid, we've got something called the FDIC, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, that would take it over. It would guarantee all the deposits so you don't have to worry about your deposits; they're not at risk. And it would be able to kind of sort things out and then resell the bank fairly quickly, and it doesn't threaten the whole system as a whole.

When you've got big banks, Citicorp or Bank of America or, you know, Wells Fargo, that controls 70 percent of the banking system, and all of them are weakening, you can't afford to have all those banks all at once start going under. Even though the deposits might be guaranteed, you've got the entire economy resting on that credit. We've got to get that credit lending, because they can take down businesses large and small alike if we don't make sure that they are still providing loans.

And so we had to step in. And it was the right thing to do—even though it's infuriating, even though it makes you angry, because you're thinking, I was responsible, and these folks are irresponsible, and somehow I'm paying for them—it was the right thing to do to step in.

The same is true with AIG. It was the right thing to do to step in. Here's the problem. It's almost like they've got—they got some—a bomb strapped to them, and they've got their hand on the trigger. You don't want them to blow up, but you got to kind of talk them, ease that finger off the trigger.

We've got to, over the next several months, come up with a plan that separates out the bad assets that they—the loans that shouldn't have

been made, these credit default swaps, et cetera. We got to separate out some of those from the good assets, because there are a lot of very healthy banks. The vast majority of banks are healthy. We've got to figure out how to raise their capital—the point that you were making earlier—so that they can start lending again. This is a very complicated, difficult task. It's not easy. We're talking about a huge system that's not just national, but international.

And so we're not going to unwind this all in a day, but what I do have confidence in is that with the plans that we're putting forward, slowly you're starting to see the system stabilize. You're starting to see more loan activity taking place, some of the security markets are coming back. And if we continue to provide some guarantees and help depositors and help strengthen some of the banks that are weakened, then my expectation is, is that we're going to be able to work our way out of this problem, and we are going to be able to get back to a point where banks are lending, businesses are investing, jobs are being created, and the economy gets back on its feet.

And when that happens, we should get a bunch of the money that has been lent to these banks back. Now, we're not going to get all of it. I just—you know, if—we're not going to get 100 percent of it back in some cases. In some cases we may get 100 percent back; in some cases we might even make a profit.

I don't want to pretend that this is going to be cheap. But the point is that instead of looking backwards, the main thing we've got to do is look forwards and say, how do we make sure that we get out of this mess, but also prevent this mess from ever happening again. And that requires the kind of financial regulation that's going to be so important for our long-term future.

All right, I've got—it's a guy's turn. It's a man's—it's a man's turn, and he's got the last—this gentleman, because he's big, and I don't want him to be mad at me.

Job Market/Work Programs for Former Felons

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President.

The President. Good afternoon.

Q. My name is Dwayne Webber, and thank you for taking the time to listen to me. Last October, I lost my job after 13 years. I was laid off. Now when I look for a job, people tell me that I have a felony from 20 years ago; I can't get no work. I have a family to support. What do I do?

The President. Well, first of all, I know how hard it is for you right now being out of work, because I can tell you've got pride, you've been working, you've been supporting your family. And one of the things that's been happening in this most recent recession is men have actually been losing jobs faster than women. And that is a very difficult thing. I mean, I know that I take great pride in, you know, taking care of my family. And it's hard when you lose your job.

The fact that you've been working steadily for 13 years post-felony seems to me a message that you made amends for your past mistakes and that you are rehabilitated and that you've proven yourself in the job market. So in that sense, I think you're actually better off than a lot of folks who make mistakes and then never get that first job that allows them to rehabilitate themselves. They've got no employment history; they're just an ex-felon. They go in and nobody gives them the time of day, and oftentimes they end up getting back into trouble.

Now, we're trying to set up some programs to help ex-felons make that transition. But frankly, based on what you're telling me, your problem is a problem that has nothing—or less to do with your felony than the fact that the job market is really tough right now. And that's why all I can tell you is we are working as hard as we can to invest in construction and infrastructure, to invest in things like clean energy, building solar panels, and wind panels—wind turbines and other things that point to a new manufacturing base and a new energy future.

We're trying to create the jobs of the future, and we're trying to get this economy moving again, fix the banking system so that you start seeing more economic activity. I have confidence that you will find a job. I have confidence in you. But in the meantime, the most that I can do is to make sure that you've got unemployment insurance that you can rely on, that you've got COBRA that you can rely on, that your family is able to get some support during these

difficult times, and then to try to get these jobs created as quickly as possible.

What kind of work did you do?

U.S. Auto Industry

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. You looked into what?

Q. I worked in the auto industry for Toyota.

The President. In the auto industry. Well, let's talk about the auto industry for a second. Now, first of all, you worked for Toyota, which is, obviously, one of the best companies, and so you—when Toyota is having problems and laying off, that tells you how tough the problems are in the auto industry right now.

We are going to have to work to move in the direction of fuel-efficient cars and trucks. I would have expected you to say that you were working for an American car company, because they're having much bigger problems. But whether it's Toyota or GM or Chrysler or Ford or any company right now, the future is going to be in fuel-efficient cars; it's going to be in these plug-in hybrids; it's going to be in developing the battery technology that allows electric cars to run for 150 miles for every gallon of gas.

And what we need to do is to invest in research and development around this clean energy auto technology. And one of the things that we've committed to doing in our budget is to spend $15 billion every single year in new technologies that maintain cutting-edge auto technologies that will ensure that good, efficient, clean cars are made right here in the United States of America. And hopefully we're going to put you back to work in the process.

Q. Thank you.

The President. So—all right, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:44 p.m. at the Orange Country Fair and Event Center. In his remarks, he referred to Jerome Hunter, chancellor, North Orange County Community College District; and State Controller John Chiang and former State Controller Steven P. Westly of California.

Statement on the Appointment of Major General J. Scott Gration as United States Special Envoy for Sudan
March 18, 2009

Today I am pleased to join Secretary Clinton in announcing the appointment of Major General J. Scott Gration as the U.S. Special Envoy for Sudan. General Gration's personal and professional background, and his service to the country as both a military leader and a humanitarian, give him the insights and experience necessary for this assignment.

Sudan is a priority for this administration, particularly at a time when it cries out for peace and for justice. The worsening humanitarian crisis there makes our task all the more urgent.

I have made clear my intention to work with the international community to end the suffering. That means supporting the full, unobstructed deployment of the joint African Union/United Nations peacekeeping force and the negotiation of a political solution that will give the people of Darfur a meaningful voice in the decisions that affect their future. The Government of Sudan's disastrous decision to expel humanitarian relief organizations leaves a void that will be filled by deprivation and despair, and they will be held accountable for the lives lost.

As we work to bring peace to Darfur, we will continue to work with both parties to Sudan's comprehensive peace agreement to ensure its full and complete implementation. All parties must see this through if Sudan and the surrounding region are to enjoy lasting stability.

I have worked closely and directly with General Gration for several years, and have traveled with him to refugee camps in Chad filled with those who were displaced by the genocide in Darfur. He is a valued personal friend, and I am pleased he has accepted this assignment. He knows the region, has broad

experience, and has my complete confidence. Standing alongside Secretary Clinton and Ambassador Rice, his appointment is a strong signal of my administration's commitment to support the people of Sudan, while seeking a lasting settlement to the violence that has claimed so many innocent lives.

NOTE: The statement referred to Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; and Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Legislation to Encourage Voluntarism
March 18, 2009

I'm pleased that the House of Representatives has passed the bipartisan GIVE Act, legislation to usher in a new era of service in this new century. I want to applaud all those who have worked so hard to see this bill through the House, and I am eager to see the companion legislation, the Serve America Act, passed through the Senate so I can sign it into law.

This legislation will help create new opportunities for millions of Americans to serve their communities and help us meet our most pressing challenges, from rebuilding our schools to providing opportunity for those in need, from helping America's veterans to helping get us on the path to energy independence. At this moment of economic crisis, when so many people are in need of help and so much needs to be done, this could not be more urgent.

We know that government alone is not the answer to the challenges we face. It will take all of us taking our share of responsibility. And while government can provide the opportunities to give back to our communities, as I hope it will through this legislation, it is up to each and every citizen to seize those opportunities. It is up to every one of us to do his or her small part to make the world a better place.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 1388.

Remarks at Southern California Edison's Electric Vehicle Technical Center in Pomona, California
March 19, 2009

The President. Thank you, guys. Thank you. Please, everybody have a seat. Well, first of all, Levon, what a wonderful story. I can tell you're a great dad, and Alex is lucky to have you.

I want to make some additional acknowledgments. We've got a lot of dignitaries here, people who were helpful in helping to pull this together. First of all, the Congresswoman from this district, Grace Napolitano, there she is right there. We've got Senator Gloria Negrete McLeod. Did I pronounce that properly? No? Why don't you help me out?

Senator Gloria Negrete McLeod. Negrete McLeod.

The President. Negrete McLeod—so nice to see you. Assemblywoman Norma Torres, Senator Christine Kehoe, good to see you; Senator Ron Calderon. We've got the mayor of Long Beach, Mayor Bob Foster is here; we've got the mayor of Pomona, Mayor Elliott Rothman. We've got Village Academy High School students who are here—in the house. Ted Craver, who is the CEO of Edison International, is here, and just helped us on the tour. Go ahead and stand. Thank you, Ted. We've got Al Fohrer, who is the CEO of Southern California Edison, who is here. We have Ed Kjaer, who just gave me the tour, right here; Pat Lavin, business manager, IBEW Local 47.

Thank you all for taking the time to be here. And it is good to be back in California. It's always nice to get out of Washington for a little bit, recharge your batteries. [*Laughter*] You know a little bit about that here. [*Laughter*] I

want to thank the folks here at the Electric Vehicle Technical Center for the tour we just had.

Yesterday I was in Costa Mesa talking with people about this economic downturn that we're in. It's a downturn that's hitting this State as much as any State in the Union. One out of 10 Californians are out of work and actively looking for jobs. The foreclosure crisis has had a devastating impact on southern California in particular. But Californians aren't just bearing the brunt of this crisis; you are doing what needs to be done to overcome it.

This workshop is a perfect example of that. Day by day, test by test, trial by painstaking trial, the scientists, the engineers, the workers at this site are developing the ideas and innovations that our future depend on. It's your ingenuity that will help create the new jobs and new industries of tomorrow.

I know it's not easy. There are days, I'm sure, when progress seems fleeting and days when it feels like you're making no progress at all. That's how it feels in the White House sometimes too. [*Laughter*] But often, our greatest discoveries are born not in a flash of brilliance, but in the crucible of a deliberate effort over time. And often they take something more than imagination and dedication alone; often they take an investment and a commitment from government. That's how we sent a man to the Moon. That's how we were able to launch a worldwide web. And it's how we'll help to build the clean energy economy that's the key to our competitiveness in the 21st century.

We'll do this because we know, as Levon just said, that the nation that leads on energy will be the nation that leads the world in the 21st century. Our children's futures depend on it. That's why, around the world, nations are racing to lead in these industries of the future. Germany is leading the world in solar power. Spain generates almost 30 percent of its power by harnessing the wind, while we manage less than 1 percent. Japan is producing the batteries that currently power American hybrid cars.

So the problem is not a lack of technology. You're producing the technology right here. The problem is that for decades we've avoided doing what we must do as a nation to turn challenge into opportunity. As a consequence, we import more oil than we did on 9/11. The 1908 Model T—think about this—the 1908 Model T earned better gas mileage than the typical SUV in 2008. Think about that. A hundred years later and we're getting less gas mileage, not better, on SUVs. Even as our economy has been transformed by new forms of technology, our electric grid looks largely the same as it did half a century ago.

So we have a choice to make. We can remain one of the world's leading importers of foreign oil, or we can make the investments that would allow us to become the world's leading exporter of renewable energy. We can let climate change continue to go unchecked, or we can help stop it. We can let the jobs of tomorrow be created abroad, or we can create those jobs right here in America and lay the foundation for lasting prosperity.

And that's what my recovery plan does. It will create or save 3.5 million jobs, nearly 400,000 of them right here in California, in part, by making investments in areas critical to our long-term growth. And that is the forward-thinking purpose of the budget that I submitted to Congress. It's a budget that makes hard choices about where to save and where to spend, that makes overdue investments in education, health care, and, yes, in energy—investments that will catalyze innovation and industry, create green jobs, and launch clean, renewable energy companies right here in California.

Over the next 3 years, we will double this Nation's supply of renewable energy. We've also made the largest investment in basic research funding in American history, an investment that will spur not only new discoveries in energy but breakthroughs in science and technology. We will invest $15 billion a year to develop technologies like wind power and solar power, advanced biofuels, clean coal, and fuel-efficient cars and trucks that are built right here in the United States of America.

We will soon lay down thousands of miles of powerlines that can create new energy in cities and towns across this country. And we will put

Americans to work making homes and buildings more efficient so that we can save billions of dollars on our energy bill, just like you've done in California for decades. And we will put 1 million plug-in hybrid vehicles on America's roads by 2015. That's what we're going to focus on.

Now, because these cars of tomorrow require batteries of tomorrow, I'm announcing that the Department of Energy is launching a $2 billion competitive grant program under the Recovery Act that will spark the manufacturing of the batteries and parts that run these cars, that will allow for the upgrading of factories that will produce them, and in the process, create thousands of jobs in facilities like this one all across America.

Show us that your idea or your company is best suited to meet America's challenges, and we will give you the chance to prove it. And just because I'm here today doesn't exempt all of you from that challenge. Every company that wants a shot at these tax dollars is going to have to prove their worth. So, Levon, you're going to have to work hard. [*Laughter*]

We're also making a $400 million downpayment on the infrastructure necessary to get these cars on the road. And because these cars won't leave the showroom unless consumers buy them, the Recovery Act includes a new tax credit of $7,500 to encourage Americans to plug one in at home.

Now, true to form, true to form, California has already forged ahead with its own plans rather than wait for Washington. It's fitting that the State home to the first freeway and the first gas station is already at work devising the next freeway and the next gas station. This green freeway you're planning with Oregon and Washington would link your States with a network of rest stops that allow you to do more than just grab a cup of coffee, but also charge your car, refuel it with hydrogen or biofuels, swap out a battery in the time it takes to fill a gas tank. Charging stations have begun to pop up around downtown San Francisco, and that city has just joined with San Jose and Oakland with the vision of becoming the electric vehicle capital of the United States.

And here at Southern California Edison and all across the country, in factories and laboratories, at the Big Three and at small startups, these innovations are taking place right now. In Michigan and Ohio and right here in California, we're seeing exciting developments in this field as hard-working men and women like you are already laying the groundwork for this new industry. Even as our American automakers are undergoing some painful adjustments, they are also retooling and reimagining themselves into an industry that can compete and win, and millions of jobs depend on it.

So this is the critical work you're doing, but it's just one component of what must be a comprehensive energy plan. And that's why we're making an $11 billion investment in upgrading our power grid, so that it can carry renewable energy from the far-flung places that harness or produce it to the cities that use it. That's why we'll create jobs retrofitting millions of homes and cutting energy use in Federal buildings by one quarter, saving the American taxpayer $1.5 billion each year.

These are challenging times, but we know we can do this. It won't come without a cost; it won't be easy. We've got 240 million cars already on the road. We've got to upgrade the world's largest energy grid while it's already in use. And other countries aren't standing around and waiting for us; they're forging ahead with their own bold energy plans.

But this is the thing we have to remember: We've faced tough challenges before. At our best, we have never relied on hope and chance alone. Time and time again, we've tapped those great American resources: industriousness and ingenuity. That, after all, is what California is all about. This is a State that has always drawn people who've had their eyes set on the horizon, who've always dreamed of a future that others thought beyond reach. That's the spirit that you are reclaiming here at the electric vehicle test center. That's the spirit we need to reclaim all across the country.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:59 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Levon Atarian, foreman, Electric Vehicle Technical Center, Southern California Edison, who introduced the

President, and his son Alex; Rep. Grace F. Napolitano; California State Sens. Gloria Negrete McLeod, Christine Kehoe, and Ronald S. Calderon; California State Assemblywoman Norma J. Torres; and Ed Kjaes, senior engineer, Electric Vehicle Technical Center, Southern California Edison.

Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session in Los Angeles, California
March 19, 2009

The President. Thank you so much. It is good to be here. It is good to be here. Although I was hoping that the Governor was going to take a little longer on his remarks, because I was standing outside soaking in some rays. [*Laughter*] Nothing like California weather.

I am greatly honored to be joined here by one of the great innovators of State government, somebody who has been leading California through some very difficult times, and somebody who has turned out to be just an outstanding partner with our administration. I'm grateful for him; I'm grateful for the first lady of California. Please give it up for Arnold Schwarzenegger and Maria Shriver. Thank you.

Another outstanding public official, somebody who is fighting every day on behalf of the working people of Los Angeles and has a vision for the future for this great city, please give a huge round of applause to your mayor, Antonio Villaraigosa. Somebody who's always been ahead of his time and has covered the waterfront in public service and has excelled in each thing that he's done, please, a big round of applause for your attorney general, Jerry Brown.

Some other friends who are here, State Auditor Elaine Howle—where's Elaine? Right here. Speaker of the Assembly, a great supporter of Obama from the start, Karen Bass; Senate President pro tem Darrell Steinberg is here. State Senator Gil Cedillo is here. Assemblyman John Perez is here. Your two wonderful United States Senators are not here, but I want you to applaud them anyway, because they work for us each and every day, Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer. Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard is not here, but she is your Congresswoman, so give her a big round of applause. And last person I want to mention—well, two other people I want to mention—I believe that my Secretary of Labor, Hilda Solis, is here in the house.

I also want to make this point. We are in a facility named after one of the finest labor leaders in this region's history and in this country's history, Miguel Contreras. And Miguel's widow is a great friend of mine, a great supporter, a great labor leader in her own right. Please give it up for Maria Elena Durazo. Maria Elena was one of our earliest supporters at a time when nobody gave us a chance. She said, "*Si se puede*." We could do it. And we're grateful to her. Thank you so much.

It's always nice to get out of Washington—at least for a little bit—and to come to places like this. The climate is nicer. So is the conversation sometimes. [*Laughter*] So I am looking forward to taking your questions and hearing about your concerns. And I look forward to telling you about the work my administration is doing to address some of those concerns.

But the one thing I don't need to tell you is that these are challenging times. I don't need to tell you this because you're living it every day. Between December of last year and January of this year, this State lost more than half a million jobs; 1 out of every 10 Californians is now out of work. Housing prices here have fallen 20 percent in the past year, and you've got one of the highest foreclosure rates in the Nation.

So your public servants are working double overtime to address these critical issues. And I know how tough times are in Los Angeles, in California, but also all across the country.

Here's what I want you to remember, though: We are going to meet these challenges; we will come out on the other side stronger and a more prosperous nation. That I can guarantee you. I can't tell you how long it will take, what obstacles we'll face along the way, but I promise you this: There will be brighter days ahead.

Because of the Recovery Act that I signed into law last month—and that your two outstanding Senators, Feinstein and Boxer, worked so hard to pass—we're making major investments to create jobs right here in California rebuilding infrastructure, weatherizing homes, and putting more police on the streets, supporting community health centers. Altogether, we expect to create or save more than 396,000 jobs in this State over the next 2 years.

But we also know that we can't create as many jobs as we want or rebuild our economy the way we hope without addressing the problem at the heart of this economic crisis, and that's our housing crisis. We know that fixing that crisis, breaking that cycle of falling home values and rising foreclosures, is one of the keys to fixing our economy.

And that's why we've launched a housing plan that will help millions of responsible homeowners save money by refinancing or modifying their mortgages. Our plan included important steps to help lower interest rates. And today, millions of Americans, people who never thought they'd be able to lower their monthly payments, are now able to take advantage of these rates, which are the lowest that they have been in decades.

Already, we're seeing a burst of refinancing. Refinancing applications jumped 30 percent last week to more than double the rate we had last fall, saving the average homeowner hundreds of dollars a month, the equivalent of a generous tax cut. That's money in their pocket, money you can use right now to pay your bills or pay off your debts or save up for a rainy day, to save for retirement or that college education for your child.

And today we launched a new web site called makinghomeaffordable.gov, to help borrowers determine whether they're eligible for our plan and to help them calculate how much money the plan could save them on their mortgage, on their monthly payments.

And keep in mind, this is in addition to the $8,000 tax credit for first-time homebuyers that's in our recovery plan. And if you buy your home—your first home—any time between now and December 1st, you can claim that credit this year, on your 2008 tax return, and receive that money in as little as 10 days. So if you haven't filed your taxes yet, but you're thinking about buying a house—[*laughter*]—you can request a 6-month extension until October 15th and claim the credit before then. Or if you've already filed your taxes or you wish to do so before April 15th, you can just amend your form later this year after you've bought your home and get your money then.

Look, the idea here is very simple: If you buy a home this year, you should be able to get your tax credit this year. That's when you need it most. That's how we'll help people start spending again. That's how we'll help raise home values, stabilize our housing market, create new jobs again. That's our plan. That's what we're going to do right here in California.

Now, I'm also pleased to announce that today California will be receiving $145 million from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide additional help to communities hardest hit by the foreclosure crisis. So these funds will be used to buy up and rehabilitate vacant and foreclosed homes and resell those homes with affordable mortgages and to provide mortgage assistance and rehabilitation loans for low-income and middle-income families. That's how we'll help people here in California live their dream of homeownership and how we'll start transforming abandoned streets lined with empty houses back into thriving neighborhoods.

Now, we know that it's not enough to address challenges like housing and infrastructure and job creation just in the short term. None of this will make a difference unless we build an economy that offers prosperity in the long run. We can't go back to a bubble-and-burst economy based on reckless speculation and spending beyond our means, where a relative few do spectacularly well while the middle class loses ground. We can't go back to a culture on Wall

Street that says it's okay to bend or break the rules and a culture in Washington that says it's okay to look the other way. We can't go back to that.

We can't allow what happened at AIG to ever happen again in this country. I know a lot of people are outraged about this; I'm outraged too. The idea that some of the very people who drove our economy into the ground could accept bonuses with one hand while they're taking taxpayer money with the other goes against our most basic sense of what's fair and what's right. I'm committed, as President, to ensuring that we have the tools to prevent the kinds of abuses that sent AIG spiraling in the first place, so we never again put our financial system at that kind of risk, and we're not held hostage by companies that are, quote, unquote, "too big to fail."

We also want to do this because it serves the most important goal we have today, which is to rebuild our economy in a way that's consistent with our values, an economy that rewards hard work and responsibility, not high-flying financial schemes; an economy that's built on a strong foundation, not one that's propelled by an overheated housing market or everybody maxing out on their credit cards. We need to bring about a recovery that endures.

You remember—remember that ad where it used to say, "We earn money the old-fashioned way; we earn it." Right? "We make money the old-fashioned way; we earn it." That's what we have to do. We have to get back to the principle of hard work and innovation and dedication. And that's exactly the purpose of the budget I'm submitting to Congress. It's a budget that makes hard choices about where to save and where to spend. Because of the massive deficit we inherited and the cost of this financial crisis, we're going through our books, line by line, so that we can cut our deficit in half by the end of my first term and reduce it by $2 trillion over the next decade.

Now, I know that the Governor is having to make these same tough choices. There are going to be initiatives here that talk about the need for everybody to chip in, everybody to give a little something up in order to get our fiscal house in order. We're going to have to do that same thing at the Federal level. Mayor Villaraigosa has got to do the same thing with respect to city budgets. These are tough times. What we won't do, though, is cut investments that will lead to real growth and real prosperity over the long term, investments that will make a difference in the lives of this generation and future generations.

So because we know that spiraling health care costs are crushing families and dragging down the entire economy, and because we know it represents one of the fastest growing parts of our budget, we've made a historic commitment to health care reform in this budget, reform that brings us closer to the day when health care is affordable and accessible for every single American. That's something we've got to shoot for. It's time. It's time. It's time.

We know and we've got three principals right here in the front row—we know that—we know and they know that countries that out-educate us today will outcompete us tomorrow. And that's why my budget invests in a complete and competitive education for every American, in early childhood education programs that work, in high standards and accountability for our schools, in finally putting the dream of a college degree or technical training within reach for anybody who wants it.

Because we know that enhancing America's competitiveness will require reducing our dependence on foreign oil and building a clean energy economy, this budget will spark the transformation we need to create green jobs and launch renewable energy companies right here in California. It makes clean energy the profitable kind of energy and invests in technologies like wind power and solar power and fuel-efficient cars and trucks and high-speed rail—powered by batteries like the one I saw in Pomona earlier today—all of which will help us combat climate change. That's got to be a priority. That's what this budget does.

Now, here's what this budget doesn't do. It doesn't raise taxes on any family making less than a 150—$250,000 a year, by a single dime. In fact, 95 percent of all working families will

receive a tax cut as a result of our recovery plan.

Now, there are those who say these plans are too ambitious, that anything we should be trying to do is just focused on the banking crisis, that we should be trying to do less not more. In fact, somebody was saying the other—today, I think, that I shouldn't be on Leno. [*Laughter*] I can't handle that and the economy at the same time.

Listen, here's what I say. I say our challenges are too big to ignore. The cost of our health care is too high to ignore. Our dependence on oil is too dangerous to ignore. Our education deficit is too wide to ignore. To kick these problems down the road for another 4 years or 8 years, that would be to continue the same irresponsibility that led us to this point in the first place. And I did not run for President to pass on our problems to the next generation. I ran for President to solve these problems for the next generation and for the next President. So I—that's what you want.

I know some folks on Washington and on Wall Street are saying we should just focus on their problems, and I understand the thinking behind that. It would be nice if I could just pick and choose what problems to face, when to face them. So I could say, well, no, I don't want to deal with war in Afghanistan right now, and I'd prefer not having to deal with climate change right now. And if you could just hold on—even though you don't have health care, just please wait, because I've got other things to do. [*Laughter*]

But that's not how things work. That's not how it works for you. You don't get to choose between paying your mortgage bills or your medical bills. You don't get to choose between paying your kids' tuition and saving enough for retirement. You've got to take all those problems on at the same time, and you need a government that will do the same. That's what leadership is about; that's what the debate on this budget is all about—about whether we're willing to do what it needs to be done to get our economy moving and put people back to work and put us on the road to shared and lasting priorities. That's what I'm going to do. That's what I'm going to focus on. We're going to get it done with your help. I need you all.

Okay. All right. This is the fun part of the program. Everybody have a seat. This is the fun part of the program. Now, first of all, we haven't prescreened anybody. So if you don't like me, go ahead and just say, you know, "You're a bum." That's okay. Hold on, hold on one second. Just hold on. [*Laughter*] Just a couple of rules. First of all, we're going to go girl, boy, girl, boy. I'm not going to be able to get to every question, so, people, raise your hands. I'll try to get as many as possible; we'll try to go around the room.

There are people with microphones in the audience—this young lady, for example—an example. So wait until she gets there so everybody can hear your question. And the only other thing is, since we have a lot of people and not that much time, if everybody could try to keep their question relatively short that will be helpful. Okay? And stand when I've called on you. You don't need to stand before I've called on you, but stand when I've called on you.

Okay, this young lady in the black right here, she gets the first question. Introduce yourself too.

Health Care Reform

Q. My name is Patricia Zae.

The President. Hey, Patricia.

Q. Hi. First, I want to say I'm very glad and thankful that you are our President. And 5 years ago I told my friend Tim that Barack Obama will be President, and he said, no, not in my lifetime there won't be a black President. And I said, "Just wait a few years." And when you won I said, "I told you so."

The President. See there. Always satisfying to say, "I told you so."

Q. And he was very happy. But he was very happy for me to tell him so.

The President. Good.

Q. So my question is, you talk about health care, which usually means insurance after you're sick. What about making our lifestyle healthier? Like we have corn syrup, we have trans fats, in all that food—those things are illegal in Europe. And I know people that go to Europe and they overeat, but they lose weight because our—their foods don't have all the hormones and the additives. And also, you know

that Clinton put legislation into—that limited the dumping of mercury into the rivers, and then you-know-who came into office and took that legislation away, and now the——

The President. Okay, all right, all right, all right.

Q. ——are out of control.

The President. Okay. Let me answer your first question.

Q. Are you going to put that legislation——

The President. Okay. First of all, if you burn that many calories asking a question—[*laughter*]—you know, I mean, she's fired up. So you'll be able to eat whatever you want.

Q. No, not trans fats——

The President. Anyway, all right, let me answer your question. And that—did you just hit—hand the mike to somebody else.

This is actually a serious question. You're exactly right that if we are going to reform our health care system, what we can't do is simply add more people to a hugely inefficient system that is costing us more and more each and every year, because eventually it will bankrupt families, it will bankrupt State governments, and it will bankrupt the country.

So the only way that we can initiate true health care reform is if we control costs. And one of the most important ways for us to control costs is to deal with the issue of prevention, which means making sure that we have proper nutrition programs in our schools, making sure that we've got effective physical education programs for our children. It means making sure that everybody has access to a primary care doctor and that they are getting regular checkups, that we are avoiding preventable diseases like diabetes that are helping to shoot our medical costs through the roof.

So that's going to be a huge component of whatever health care reform package that I sign, is a major push towards prevention. There's some other areas where we can do some important cost savings as well. Information technology—the Recovery Act provides billions of dollars just putting our medical records online so—[*inaudible*].

Okay, hold on one second. If we've got a replacement mike that would be helpful, because this one's going in and out a little bit. You got one? Well, no, but you need that for your guys. There we go.

Let's—okay, that's good. But these—if everybody's data—medical data is in digital form with important privacy protections, we can reduce medical errors, we can make sure that doctors and nurses, pharmacists are all communicating more effectively. We'll have, actually, better quality in hospitals, and we will also be driving down costs. So there are a whole host of measures that we put down payments on, on the recovery package, but we've got to get our budget passed in order to actually make it happen.

One last point I'll make; something that has not been getting a lot of attention. We signed a renewal of the Children's Health Insurance Program that added millions of children, including children of legal immigrants, into the mix. That's an important tool to prevent long-term diseases that can cost us a lot of money.

All right, the gentleman right here. The gentleman right here with the beard.

Americans With Disabilities

Event staff member. [*Inaudible*]

Q. No, I'm unable to stand up. I believe that I'm entitled to an exception of that rule under the ADA.

Event staff member. Oh, I'm so sorry.

Q. I forgive you.

The President. Go ahead.

Q. Okay.

The President. Introduce yourself.

Q. I'm Gary Karp, and Mr. President, thank God for you. Sir, my question regards the true renaissance that's happening with people with disabilities. They are an emerging population, millions of people with more potential in capacity, more mobile, more educated, more healthy, more empowered technology, but still trapped in very, very old social models that see them in terms of tragedy and charity and need and care. And the modern population of people with disabilities simply does not fit that model.

And as your plan succeeds and you generate these jobs, and as baby boomers retire, we're going to need every single person of capacity to work that we can. And that must include

many, many, many thousands, if not millions, of people with disabilities.

So—I see you nodding your head, so my first question is, do you subscribe to what I'm saying, and next of all, can you talk about how your disability agenda will release this emerging potential that's currently wasted and untapped?

The President. Well, you are exactly right, that we need everybody. And every program that we have has to be thinking on the front end, how do we make sure that it is inclusive and building into it our ability to draw on the capacities of persons with disabilities. That's true on the education front where our recovery package increases funding for children with disabilities. It is true in terms of how Hilda Solis, our Secretary of Labor, will be thinking about our training programs, to make sure that we are not excluding from training for high-tech jobs—the new jobs of the future—persons with disability. It means enforcing the ADA and fighting back on some of—court opinions that have tried to narrow, in ways that I think are inappropriate, the original intent of that legislation.

So one of the things that I think is important is to make sure, as you pointed out, that we don't see this as an afterthought, a segregated program, but we are infusing every department, every agency, every act that we take with a mindfulness about the importance of persons with disabilities, their skills, their talents, their capacity. That I think is the approach that my administration is going to take, and we hope that by taking that approach that attitude will infuse State and local governments that are also receiving Federal money. Okay?

This young lady right here has had her hand up for a while.

Taxes/Use of Economic Stabilization Funds

Q. Hello, Mr. President——

The President. Don't worry, I'm going to get around. Hold on a second, I'm going around. Go ahead.

Q. Hello.

The President. Hi.

Q. My name is Sharnette.

The President. Hey, Sharnette.

Q. And first of all, I would just like to say, as a mixed-race individual, it's so fantastic to finally have a role model and a leader that I can actually identify with, so thank you.

The President. Well, that's nice. Thank you.

Q. They're haven't been a whole lot, growing up. So, okay, so my question is specific to California. As you know, we have one of the highest costs of living in the U.S. here. A household income that is considered middle or upper class in any other State wouldn't go very far here. However, the tax laws and the recent economic stimulus address household income on a national level and do not take into account the cost of living by State, as far as I know. California now has, as you mentioned before, a higher unemployment rate than the national average; we make up one-third of Nation's foreclosures.

So what I want to know is, what can be done to address California's unique and—unique situation and stimulate the economy here in California, and like you mentioned, just be prosperous into the future, keeping in mind, again, household incomes. And we're not really apples-to-apples with other States, but we're taxed as if we are.

The President. Well, look, I mean, obviously, there's differentiation between States both in terms of cost of living, but also in terms of salaries. And generally, those are taken into account through the deductions that are available through the Tax Code. I would say that the biggest problem, though, is probably not—in our Tax Code—is not the difference between how Californians are treated and people in Idaho are treated. The bigger difference actually has to do with how people inside California are treated by the Tax Code.

So if you are a multimillionaire who get most of your income from dividends and capital gains, then you're typically paying 15 percent of your income in taxes at the Federal level. But if you're a secretary making $30,000 a year in wages, then you're paying a higher rate. Now, so the secretary is paying a higher rate than Warren Buffett as a percentage of their income. That's the inequity that I think is most destructive, because what it's done is, over the last decade the average working family has seen their

median income flatline; their wages and income have not gone up.

On the other hand, people who were at the very top of the income scale, and I'm now included in that category, we've seen all the benefits of economic growth when things were going well. And I actually think that contributes to a cycle of bubble and bust. And if we have a situation in which middle class people are earning a decent living, where we've got bottom-up economic growth, then I think that's good for everybody. I think ultimately that's good for businesses. I think it's good for rich folks, because when the economy rises, everybody does well. And you don't get as many distortions as you've gotten in this sort of bubble-and-bust cycle that we've had.

Now, there are some things in California that we are doing that focus on particular needs here. We just talked—Governor Schwarzenegger and Mayor Villaraigosa—here in Los Angeles, for example, there is an enormous opportunity to deal with traffic and transit and transportation in a way that will relieve congestion, make this economy more efficient, more productive. But the needs of Los Angeles in terms of transportation dollars are going to be different from the needs of somebody in a predominantly rural State.

And one of the things that we want to do in terms of how transportation dollars flow is to start emphasizing the fact that the vast majority of people live in suburbs or in cities in metropolitan regions, and how can we do a better job in planning and coordinating regionally so that you aren't in your car for 2 hours a day. There are things that we can do that end up being specific to the situation of the economy in California, but generally, California oftentimes gets hit worse when recessions come, but you also rise up faster when the economy starts to recover. So I'm confident California will continue to be on the cutting edge of our economy.

All right, it's a guy's turn, so ladies, put your hands down. [*Laughter*] It's a guy's turn. This gentleman right here, right here.

Q. Mr. President, I really don't have a question, but I'd like to offer up to you a young lady by the name of Lena Kennedy who hosted you in Pasadena as possibly your domestic policy adviser for children and families.

The President. Oh, okay. [*Laughter*] All right.

Q. And my name is John Kennedy.

The President. Okay, John. [*Laughter*] All right, well, we'll—does she know that you were just doing that?

Q. No. Oh, no.

The President. That's a shame. She's going to be all embarrassed. [*Laughter*] All right, since that wasn't really a question, I'm going to call on another guy.

Gentleman back there in the cap, right there. Let's get a microphone. Right there.

National Economy

Q. Thank you.

The President. What's your name?

Q. My name is Peter Graff. I immigrated here from Germany, and last summer, I was very excited when you had that wonderful reception in Berlin.

Now, former Vice President Cheney used to say deficits don't matter. But since you inherited his mess, the national debt has been growing and growing and no ending in sight. I'm very happy you are in the White House, but for the first time I'm worried about this country, the stability and the future.

My question: How—is there a chance that we may follow in the footsteps of Iceland and one day just simply be broke? That's the question.

The President. No. [*Laughter*]

Q. Thank you.

The President. No. But, you know, there is a chance that we leave such a mountain of debt to the next generation that it makes them poor over the long term, because we're having to borrow from foreign countries, make interest payments to other countries, and that over time standards of living here are lower than they should be relative to other countries. So we've got to get control of our deficit.

Now, you're right, I inherited a $1.3 trillion deficit. And we saw the national debt double during the previous administration, which is why when I hear—generally, I'm a—I try to be a bipartisan guy, but when I hear some folks

from the other party in Congress start howling about the deficits, I'm starting to think, well, where have you been? What have you been doing?

I mean, you would've thought a good time to do something about deficits was when the economy was going good, right? You would have thought that's when you would have been saving away a little bit. If you had inherited a surplus, you would have thought that maybe, you know, we'll maintain that. So I don't put much stock in some of those political attacks. But what is true is that the path we're on right now is unsustainable.

So here's what we have to do. Our most immediate and urgent task is to put people back to work and get the economy rolling again. That's the thing we have to do right now. And that means that for the next couple of years, we're going to have to tolerate much higher deficits than I'm comfortable with, not just for the recovery package, but the money that we've had to put in to deal with the financial crisis. The fact that people are out of work means they are needing unemployment insurance, they need additional—there are greater needs for food stamps. All sorts of pressures and strains are placed on State government and local governments during a deep recession like this one.

So we've got to suffer some big deficits while we move into recovery. The worst thing we could do is not worry about recovery, slash government spending at the same time as businesses are slashing their spending and consumers are slashing their spending. That creates a downward spiral that could make things even worse.

But as soon as we start seeing a recovery—and my hope is, is that over the next couple of years, we will have started moving again, building back up—then what we have to do is build in a pathway for reducing our deficits. We've already, in this budget, slated that in the out years we're going to reduce nondiscretionary—nondefense discretionary spending. Everything other than defense spending and entitlements like Social Security and Medicare, we're going to reduce those to the lowest level relative to GDP of any time since the 1960s.

I've also said that we are going to end the Iraq war, which is going to save us money during that period of time. We are going to have to reform Medicare, and that's part of the overall health care reform that we were talking about earlier. If we can get control of health care costs as a whole, then we can start bending the curve of costs for Medicare and Medicaid.

So we are already making some tough choices, reducing the deficit by $2 trillion, but we're going to have to do more. And the biggest thing we're going to have to do is take on Medicare and Medicaid health care costs. That's going to be the most important thing that we can do over the long term. All right.

Okay. It's a woman's turn. This young lady back there, go ahead.

Education Reform at the Local Level

Q. Hello, Mr. President, my name is Blanca Aguilar Gomez. And this question is on behalf of my sister, who's a public school teacher for the Los Angeles Unified School District, and on behalf of all the children, which is over 700,000 children—the second-largest school district in the Nation—we need help.

Even with the best leadership that we have currently with the district, with Board President Monica Garcia and the new superintendent, Ray Cortines, you know, we don't—the State doesn't have the money, and we're having to lay off thousands of teachers, you know, it's scary for our children.

You know, even with the stimulus packet, in 3 years, I think, we're going to be in a deficit of $1.3 billion. Where are we going to get that money?

The President. Well, this is why—before we came on, the Governor and I were talking. And the fact is, is that we are massively ramping up education spending at the Federal level, on a whole variety of fronts. But historically most education funding is done at the State level, at the local level.

So we may be able to take education funding at the Federal level from 7 percent to 9 percent, for example, but the lion's share is still going to be coming locally. And that's why it's so important for everybody to be engaged in the various initiatives that are going to be coming up, to

make sure that what you just articulated, the need to invest in our kids, that that is reflected in terms of State budgets.

Now, one thing I've got to say, though—and I think I speak for every public official here—you can't have something for nothing. You can't have something for nothing. I was in the White House, and we had done this event when we signed stem cell research, and a woman who was in the audience, she came up to me and she shook my hand and she said, "Oh, President Obama, I'm very excited, but you just had this health care forum—please, please, I hope your plan is free health care for all." And I said, "Listen, nothing is free." Nothing is free.

So the reason I make that point is you can't ask local elected officials to raise teachers' salaries and cut taxes and balance the budget and increase roads. At some point you've got to make some choices. So if you want a high quality education—and California historically had the best education system in the country—then somebody has got to pay for it.

Now, the obligation of local officials—and this is the same—is true on the Federal Government—our obligation is to make sure that every dime of money is being spent wisely, every dime of money is being spent wisely.

And when it comes to education—and I'm speaking to teachers here and educators—let me say this—I want to do some truth-telling here. Uh-oh. [*Laughter*] I love teachers. There is no profession that is more important than teaching. My sister is a teacher, but—and I am a huge supporter of the teachers' unions. They were some of my first supporters. But let me tell you, you can't just be talking more money, more money, without also talking about how are we going to reform and make the system better. There's got to be a reform agenda in exchange for the money. There's got to be a reform agenda in exchange for the money.

So don't just say, give us more money or smaller classrooms, but you're not willing to consider, for example, how are we going to do better assessments. Or how are going to work to improve teacher performance, and if a teacher is not improving, how do we get them to choose a different career, right? I mean, there's got to be some serious conversation about that.

Now, before I get off the topic of the education, let me do a little more truth-telling. Parents, you can't complain about the schools and complain about the teachers, but when your child comes home, they're playing video games and not doing homework, and you don't have time to go to your teacher and parent—teacher-parent meeting. Our parents have to instill a sense of excellence and a thirst for knowledge.

And the truth of the matter is, even as overcrowded as schools may be, as poor the computer equipment may be, if you took a bunch of kids right now from China or India and you put them in these classrooms, from their perspective these would be unbelievable schools. I mean, they don't have better facilities, but they're out-performing us in math and science. Why is that? Well, part of it is, is that we as parents are not insisting and demanding on the kind of higher performance from our kids. So everybody has got to be more accountable in order to improve our education system.

All right. It's a man's turn. I'm going to turn back here—this guy in the green shirt, right here. Everybody likes you, man. What, is he on like "Gossip Girl" or something? I don't—[*laughter*]—I didn't recognize him, but maybe he's—is he a movie star? Who's got a mike? Go ahead.

Changing America

Q. Not a movie star, just one of your volunteers.

The President. There you go.

Q. And they're all around here. And in my book, that's even more powerful. I guess that's the fundamental question I have is, there's such a passion in this country, and you inspired such a passion for us to do things that we never had before in the name of volunteerism, in the name of making you become our President—like—and thank you to everyone that was involved with that.

My question is, clearly this is not something you can do alone in terms of changing our country. How can we best partner with you,

how can we be most effective, moving forward, to change this country?

The President. Well, the first thing, I think, is patience. No, I'm serious about this, because, look, there was a lot of excitement during the campaign, and we were talking about the importance of bringing about change. We are moving systematically to bring about change. But change is hard. Change doesn't happen overnight. And the change we bring has to be matched by a sense of responsibility, because if you try to just change things overnight and you haven't thought everything through, you could have some real problems.

So for example, I closed Guantanamo. That was the right thing to do. But I made the—but in making that decision I said we're going to take a year to figure out how are we going to deal with the folks who are detained there, some of whom really are dangerous folks, who if we just release them could do us harm. I believe that we are going to be able to effectively balance our national security needs with our civil liberties concerns, but it's not something that happens overnight. We've got to do it systematically.

On the economy, this financial crisis that we've had is the largest since the Great Depression. I understand how mad everybody is about this AIG bonus business. I understand that. As I said before, I'm mad. And even though I didn't draw up these AIG contracts, my White House didn't—it's my responsibility to fix the system. But fixing the system requires us understanding that if banks are not solvent, if they are not lending, then businesses are not going to be able to invest; we are not going to be able to create jobs. And we can be as mad as we want, but the fact of the matter is, we've got to work through this huge mess that was made in the financial system. It's going to cost some money. It's not going to be pretty; people are going to be frustrated. And we are going to get it done. So on a whole range of these fronts, the first thing we need from the American people is a sense that we are going to get it done, but it's going to take a little bit of time.

The second thing is keep paying attention to the debates that are taking place right now, so when we have a big budget debate—I want everybody who was paying so much attention during the election to be as interested—what's going on in terms of education spending, what's going on in terms of higher health care spending, are the investments we're planning to make on energy, are they right ones? Because, again, we're going to have some tough choices to make.

I can't just keep on—I can't print money. And so if we are going to make a serious investment in clean energy, well, that requires that we phase out dirty energy. And that requires that we stop subsidizing certain things and instead subsidize other things. Somebody is not going to be happy about that because they've been getting the subsidies, so they will start running ads on television saying this is a terrible energy plan.

And you've got to pay attention and educate your coworkers and educate your friends and your family. And we're not—my administration also—here's one last claim I want to make, a guarantee. We are not always going to be right, and I don't want everybody disappointed if we make a mistake here or there. The important point is, are we moving in the right direction; are we, generally speaking, consistent with our campaign promises; are we reflecting the values of hard-working middle class Americans who are trying to see Washington work for them?

And that's one thing I can assure you of, is that 4 years from now, you are going to be able to look back and you're going to say, "You know what—A, the guy worked hard on what he said he was going to work hard on during the campaign, and he may not have gotten everything perfect, but we are moving in the right direction." That's what we've—that's what we're going to be focused on over the next few years.

All right, I've only got time for a couple more questions. All right. I've got to—I'm trying to look. I'm going to go way up there. Way up there. Yes, that young—it's a young lady's turn right there. Right there.

Financial Aid for Higher Education/Voluntarism

Q. Hi, President Obama. My name is Kirsten Perry, and I'm a recent college graduate. My mom is a teacher and my dad is a disabled

carpenter, so needless to say, I have accrued a significant amount of student loan debt. And I want to know what your administration is going to do for young people like me who are educated, who are new to the workforce, who would be ready to enter the housing market, ready to invest in small business, ready to take lower paying jobs like teaching, but can't because we're burdened with an excess of student loans?

The President. Right, well, it's a great question. It's a great question. Here's what we're going to be doing going forward, so let me start there. In our current budget, we are calling for mandatory increases in Pell grant programs to keep up with inflation, improvements in the Perkins loan program. We are going to cut out the middle men, banks that are making huge profits on student loans, just make those loans that are federally guaranteed directly to the students. That will save us billions of dollars that will allow us to expand student loan assistance and grant assistance to more people.

So we've got a significant increase in student loan support slated in this budget. Now, I recognize, though, if you've already graduated then that may not—that will be cold comfort for you. And one of the things that we're trying to figure out is are there ways that we can lower interest rates or principal on some of the existing student loans that are out there by consolidation or other tools. We have not announced an official program on that front, but we do believe that there are going to be some things that we can do.

This is an example, by the way, of where the banking reforms that we are talking about are so important. We just announced some changes, for example, in the ability of the student loan market, the secondary market of securitized student loans to be purchased in such a way that we can reduce the interest rates on student loans for everybody. But if we don't help the banks it's going to be hard for us in order to lower some of these student loan rates. So a lot of these things are intertwined, and we've got to make sure that we deal with that.

The last point I want to make—I expect that over the next couple of weeks, maybe even next week, we are going to be in a position to sign a national service bill coming from the House and the Senate, and as part of this, what we're going to be doing is expanding programs like the Peace Corps and Teach For America and other mechanisms, other avenues where you can make a decision as a young person to teach for 3 years or to serve in the Peace Corps or to serve in the Foreign Service or volunteer in some fashion in your communities and help finance your education in the process. And I think there are young people all across California, all across America, who are interested in that opportunity, and I want to give that opportunity to you.

All right. Okay, this is the last question. You know, I'm going to—on the last question I think I—hold on a second, I think I want to call on—I want to call on a young person, a student. But it's got to be a guy—it's a guy. No, no, you're not that young, you sit down. [*Laughter*] That guy right there. The young guy in the T-shirt, or in the tie—in the tie. This young man right here. That guy right there.

All right, you've got to stand up, though. You look good in that tie.

Education Reform

Q. Hi, my name is Ethan. President Obama, our school is in big trouble because of budget cuts are—25 of our teachers already have been fired, to get pink slips. And the whole school, my class, we made this.

The President. Oh, you made—are those letters for me?

Q. Yes.

The President. What's your name?

Q. Ethan Lopez.

The President. Ethan Lopez. How old are you, Ethan?

Q. Eight.

The President. Eight. So what grade are you in?

Q. Third grade.

The President. Third grade. Do you like school?

Q. Yes.

The President. Yes, you do? Is that your mom next to you?

Q. Yes.

The President. Yes. She looks very nice. [*Laughter*] Well, let me—as I said before, Ethan, we're going to do everything we can to protect our teachers. We already passed a law in Washington that's going to give more money to the State to help keep teachers in their jobs. And one of the things that we didn't talk about earlier, we're also going to be putting more money into school construction, because there are a lot of overcrowded schools and overcrowded classrooms that don't—aren't wired for the Internet effectively. And we are going to make sure that we invest in that as well, because I want you to get a first-class education.

What do you want to be when you grow up, have you decided yet?

Q. Yes.

The President. What would you like to be?

Q. A cop.

The President. A cop. That's what I'm talking about, all right.

Well, I can tell that you will be an outstanding police officer. Your mom is proud of you. We're all proud of you. Give Ethan a big round of applause.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:18 p.m. at the Miguel Contreras Learning Center. In his remarks, he referred to State Attorney General Edmund G. "Jerry" Brown, Jr., of California; Maria Elena Durazo, secretary treasurer, Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, AFL–CIO; and Warren E. Buffet, chairman, Berkshire Hathaway, Inc.

Interview With Jay Leno of "The Tonight Show" in Burbank, California
March 19, 2009

Mr. Leno. I'm excited, I'm honored to introduce my first guest, the 44th President of the United States, please welcome President Barack Obama.

The President. Thank you.

Mr. Leno. Good to see you.

The President. It is good to see you and—[*applause*]. Thank you. Let me just say, I think Kevin looks good in a suit. [*Laughter*]

Kevin Eubanks. Thank you, sir. Thank you, sir.

The President's Previous Visit/Life as President of the United States

The President. He looks a little like Secret Service. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. He does, yes. And you're the only guy who can get him to wear it. [*Laughter*]

Now, you know, it's funny, because the last time you were here, you walked in, you had your jacket on your finger, and you had the two guys with you——

The President. Right.

Mr. Leno. ——and that was it. Big change?

The President. You know, the—I was mentioning earlier, we landed yesterday, and then—this is an example of life in the bubble—we landed at the fairground down in Costa Mesa, and I see the fairground where I think we're having this town hall, and I said, "Well, why don't we walk over there?" Secret Service says, "No, sir, it's 750 yards." [*Laughter*] So I was trying to calculate—well, that's like a 5-minute walk? "Yes, sir. Sorry." [*Laughter*] Now, they let me walk on the way back, but, you know, the doctor is behind me with the defibrillator. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. Wow.

The President. Michelle jokes about how our motorcade—you know, we've got the ambulance and then the caboose and then the dog sled—[*laughter*]—there's the submarine. [*Laughter*] There's a whole bunch of stuff going on.

The President's First Days in Office/National Economy

Mr. Leno. Now it's only, what, 59 days now, right?

The President. Yes, 59 days.

Mr. Leno. And so much scrutiny. Is it fair to judge so quickly? I mean——

The President. Well, look, we are going through a difficult time. I welcome the challenge. You know, I ran for President because I thought we needed big changes. And I do think

in Washington it's a little bit like "American Idol," except everybody is Simon Cowell. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. Wow. Wow. That's rough. That's rough.

The President. Everybody's got an opinion. But that's part of what makes for our democracy. You know, it's contentious, and people are hitting back. And I do think, though, that the American people are all in a place where they understand it took us a while to get into this mess, it's going to take a while for us to get out of it. And if they have confidence that I'm making steps to deal with issues like health care and energy and education, that matter deeply to their daily lives, then I think they're going to give us some time.

American International Group (AIG) Bonuses/ Financial Regulatory System

Mr. Leno. Let me ask you about this. I know you are angry, because, you know, doing what I do, you kind of study body language a little bit. And you looked very angry about these bonuses; actually, stunned.

The President. Stunned. Stunned is the word.

Mr. Leno. Tell people what happened. I know people have been over it, just——

The President. Well, look, here's what happened. You've got a company, AIG, which used to be just a regular old insurance company; then they insured a whole bunch of stuff, and they were very profitable, and it was a good, solid company. Then they decided—some smart person decided, let's put a hedge fund on top of the insurance company and let's sell these derivative products to banks all around the world, which are basically guarantees or insurance policies on all these subprime mortgages.

And this smart person said, you know, none of these things are going to go bust; this subprime thing, it's a great deal; you can make a lot of profit. So they sold a whole bunch of them—billions and billions of dollars. And what happened is, is that when people started going bust on subprime mortgages, you had $30 worth of debt on every dollar worth of mortgage, and the whole house of cards just started falling down.

So the problem with AIG was that it owed so much and was tangled up with so many banks and institutions that if you had allowed it to just liquidate, to go into bankruptcy, it could have brought the whole financial system down. So it was the right thing to do to intervene in AIG.

Now, the question is, who in their right mind, when your company is going bust, decides we're going to be paying a whole bunch of bonuses to people? And that, I think, speaks to a broader culture that existed on Wall Street, where I think people just had this general attitude of entitlement, where, we must be the best and the brightest; we deserve $10 million or $50 million or $100 million dollar payouts.

Mr. Leno. Right.

The President. And, you know, the immediate bonuses that went to AIG are a problem. But the larger problem is we've got to get back to an attitude where people know enough is enough, and people have a sense of responsibility, and they understand that their actions are going to have an impact on everybody. And if we can get back to those values that built America, then I think we're going to be okay.

Mr. Leno. Well, you know, it's interesting, when you said—it's like, I had to laugh the other day when the CEO of AIG said, okay, I've asked them to give half the bonuses back. Now, if you rob a bank and you go into court—[*laughter*]—and you go, "Your Honor, I'm going to give you half the money back." [*Laughter*] And they seem stunned that we're not jumping at this wonderful offer.

The President. Well, you know, the only place I think that might work is in Hollywood. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. Let me ask you this. Now, they—I heard them say, well, one of the problems is it's contractual, and if we don't pay these bonuses, well, they can sue us. All the time people say, so sue me.

The President. So sue me, right.

Mr. Leno. I mean, the Federal Government is in debt a trillion dollars. We're broke—sue us. Sue me. [*Laughter*]

The President. In fairness, I think that part of the calculation they were making was the way the contracts were written said, if you don't pay us immediately, then we can claim three times as much as we were owed under the bonuses. And so they were making a legal calculation, and their legal judgment was not necessarily wrong.

But there's a moral and an ethical aspect to this as well. And I think that's what has gotten everybody so fired up. The main thing—we're going to do everything we can to see if we can get these bonuses back. But I think the most important thing that we can do is make sure that we put in a bunch of financial regulatory mechanisms to prevent companies like an AIG holding the rest of us hostage. Because that's the real problem.

The problem is not just what's happened over the last 6 months. The problem is what was happening for years, where people were able to take huge, excessive risks with other people's money, putting the entire financial system at risk, and there were no checks, there were no balances, there was nobody overseeing the process.

And so what we're going to be moving very aggressively on, even as we try to fix the current mess, is make sure that before somebody makes a bad bet you say, hold on, you can't do that.

Legislation to Tax Bonuses for Certain Employees of Companies Receiving Trouble Assets Relief Program Money

Mr. Leno. Well, here's something that kind of scared me. Today they passed this thing that says we're going to tax 90 percent of these bonuses. And the part that scares me is, I mean, you're a good guy—if the government decides they don't like a guy, all of a sudden, hey, we're going to tax you and then, boom, and it passes. I mean, that seems a little scary as a taxpayer, they can just decide—you want to take a break and answer that when we come back? Okay, hold that answer.

The President. I will. I've got a good answer too.

[*At this point, there was a break in the interview.*]

Mr. Leno. Welcome back. We are talking with President Barack Obama.

Before the break, I mentioned that they had just passed this new bill which will tax them 90 percent, and I said it was frightening to me as an American that Congress, whoever, could decide, I don't like that group, let's pass a law and tax them at 90 percent.

The President. Well, look, I understand Congress's frustrations, and they're responding to, I think, everybody's anger. But I think that the best way to handle this is to make sure that you've closed the door before the horse gets out of the barn. And what happened here was the money has already gone out and people are scrambling to try to find ways to get back at them.

The change I'd like to see in terms of tax policy is that we have a system, going back to where we were back in the 1990s, where you and I who are doing pretty well pay a little bit more to pay for health care, to pay for energy, to make sure that kids can go to college who aren't as fortunate as our—as my kids might be. Those are the kinds of measured steps that we can take. But the important thing over the next several months is making sure that we don't lurch from thing to thing, but we try to make steady progress, build a foundation for long-term economic growth. That's what I think the American people expect.

Financial Regulatory System Reform

Mr. Leno. I just read today about Merrill Lynch. They handed out 3.6 billion. It's not even million anymore, it's billions in bonuses. I know it would make me feel good—shouldn't somebody go to jail? [*Laughter*] I say that because I watch those people in New York, even people who had lost everything—when Bernard Madoff went to jail, at least they felt they got something.

The President. Right. They got some satisfaction. Here's the dirty little secret, though. Most of the stuff that got us into trouble was perfectly legal. And that is a sign of how much we've got to change our laws, right? We were talking earlier about credit cards, and it's legal to charge somebody 30 percent on their credit card and charge fees and so forth that people don't

always know what they're getting into. So the answer is to deal with those laws in a way that gives the average consumer a break.

When you buy a toaster, if it explodes in your face there's a law that says your toasters need to be safe. But when you get a credit card, or you get a mortgage, there's no law on the books that says if that explodes in your face financially, somehow you're going to be protected.

So this is—the need for getting back to some commonsense regulations—there's nothing wrong with innovation in the financial markets. We want people to be successful; we want people to be able to make a profit. Banks are critical to our economy. And we want credit to flow again, but we just want to make sure that there's enough regulatory common sense in place that ordinary Americans aren't taken advantage of, and taxpayers, after the fact, aren't taken advantage of.

National Economy

Mr. Leno. Yes—because when I was a kid, we would—banks or credit cards would lend you money so you would pay it back. Now they lend you money so you can't pay it back. [*Laughter*] It's like we were talking before, I mentioned we all saw "A Wonderful Life"—Mr. Potter, the meanest man, remember he owned the whole town? You know what he charged on a mortgage? Two percent. [*Laughter*]

The President. He's like Mother Teresa now. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. Like Mother Teresa now. [*Laughter*] He makes VISA look like ohh——

The President. Well, and part of what happened over the last 15, 20 years is that so much money was made in finance that about 40 percent, I think, of our overall growth, our overall economic growth, was in the financial sector. Well, now what we're finding out is a lot of that growth wasn't real. It was paper money, paper profits on the books, but it could be easily wiped out.

And what we need is steady growth; we need young people, instead of—a smart kid coming out of school, instead of wanting to be an investment banker, we need them to decide they want to be an engineer, they want to be a scientist, they want to be a doctor or a teacher. And if we're rewarding those kinds of things that actually contribute to making things and making people's lives better, that's going to put our economy on solid footing. We won't have this kind of bubble-and-bust economy that we've gotten so caught up in for the last several years.

Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner

Mr. Leno. Now, Treasury Secretary Geithner, he seems to be taking a little bit of heat here. How is he holding up with this? He seems like a smart guy.

The President. He is a smart guy, and he's a calm and steady guy. I don't think people fully appreciate the plate that was handed him. This guy has not just a banking crisis, he's got the worst recession since the Great Depression, he's got an auto industry on—that has been on the verge of collapse. We've got to figure out how to coordinate with other countries internationally. He's got to deal with me; he's got to deal with Congress. And he's doing it with grace and good humor. And he understands that he's on the hot seat, but I actually think that he is taking the right steps, and we're going to have our economy back on the move.

Mr. Leno. Now, see, I love that it's all his problem. [*Laughter*]

The President. No, no, no.

Mr. Leno. I mean, when he came in you probably said, "Hey, this is not a problem." Now, it's, "Hey, you got this, you got that; hey, good luck." [*Laughter*]

The President. No, no, but this is the point that I made, I think, 2 days ago, when somebody asked, "Well, do you have confidence in Tim Geithner?" I said, "Look, I'm the President, so ultimately all this stuff is my responsibility." If I'm not giving him the tools that he needs to make sure that we're moving things forward, then people need to look at me.

On the AIG thing, all these contracts were written well before I took office, but ultimately I'm now the guy who's responsible to fix it. And one of the things that I'm trying to break is a pattern in Washington where everybody is always looking for somebody else to blame.

And I think Geithner is doing an outstanding job. I think that we have a big mess on our hands. It's not going to be solved immediately, but it is going to get solved. And the key thing is for everybody just to stay focused on doing the job instead of trying to figure out who you can pass blame on to.

Economic Stabilization Funds

Mr. Leno. Well, when will the money—this money was given out to the banks, I would have thought by this time it would have sort of trickled down to Main Street, to people wanting to get loans. I mean, it all went out there months and months ago. Where is it?

The President. Well, what's happening is a lot of these banks are keeping it in the bank because their balance sheets had gotten so bad that they decided, you know what, for us to stay solvent we need to maintain certain capital ratios; we've got to have a certain amount of capital in the bank. And they haven't started lending it yet. And that's why what we've got to do—right now what we're doing is essentially doing a diagnostic test—trying to use some auto language here so you—[*laughter*].

Mr. Leno. Got you.

The President. We're doing a diagnostic on each of the banks, figuring out what are their capital levels, can they sustain lending. And then I think we're going to separate out—those banks that are in good shape, we're going to say to them, all right, you're on your own; go start lending again. Those banks that still have problems, we'll do a little more intervention to try to clean some of those toxic assets off their books.

But I actually have confidence that we'll get that done. In the meantime, we're taking a lot of steps to, for example, opening up—open up separate credit lines outside of banks for small businesses so that they can get credit, because there are a lot of small businesses out here who are just barely hanging on. Their credit lines are starting to be cut. We're trying to set up a securitized market for student loans and auto loans outside of the banking system. So there are other ways of getting credit flowing again. But that's why we've got to solve the banking problem, and we've got to solve issues like health care, energy, and education that will put us on a pathway for long-term economic growth.

Mr. Leno. We're going to take a break. When we come back I want to ask you what we can do—all right, we'll take a break. More with the President, we'll be right back.

[*There was another break in the interview.*]

Weathering the Current Economic Situation

Mr. Leno. Welcome back. Talking with President Barack Obama. So I was going to ask you before we went to the break—so you have—obviously, we have a lot of people with a few dollars—couple of hundred, couple of thousand—but there's millions of them. Okay, obviously, that's a tremendous financial forest. What should they do? Put their money in the bank? Should they be spending money? Should they hide it under their mattress?

The President. Look, first of all, everybody should have complete confidence in the banks. They're deposits are protected. They shouldn't be putting it in their mattresses. I will leave it up to others to provide individual, personal financial advice.

But I will say this, that if you're working right now, obviously, you've got to be prudent and you've got to recognize that the economy has been in a tough way. But, you know, we've still got kids who are going to need a coat for winter or a computer for school. You know, that young family is still going to at some point need to buy a house. And right now cars, for example, we know that typically you need about 14 million cars for this population, and right now only 9 million are being sold every year. So at some point those inventories are going to run down and people are going to start buying cars again.

So you know, what people should not do is forget that what has built America has always been a faith and a confidence in the future. And our future is bright if we take some smart steps right now. And that's what we're working on in Washington. And I think, if everybody stays focused on getting through these tough times, the future is going to be very bright for all of us.

Alternate Fuel Sources/U.S. Auto Industry

Mr. Leno. Now, you mentioned cars a minute ago. You went to the electric car—you went to look at some batteries today.

The President. I did. It's spectacular what is being down now with plug-in hybrids, where not only are you getting the hybrid technology, but now you can plug it in at home in your garage. And potentially, we could see cars getting 150 miles to a gallon of gas. And when you get home you could potentially sell the energy in your car back into the grid, back to your utility, and get money.

So we're going to be investing billions of dollars in research and development around these technologies. I know that you were mentioning you've got a hydrogen car——

Mr. Leno. I've got the GM hydrogen car. That's a whole new——

The President. That's a whole new level of technology. That's what's going to create the auto industry of the future. That's where we're going to win back manufacturing. But right now we're behind. These batteries are being made in Japan, just like wind power is being made in Europe. We need to bring that here, and that's part of what my budget and part of what our Recovery Act is all about.

Air Force One

Mr. Leno. Let me ask you some personal things. Now, how cool is it to fly in Air Force One? [*Laughter*]

The President. Now, let me tell you, I personally think it's pretty cool. Especially because they give you, you know, the jacket with the seal on it. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. Oh, yeah. See, I still get the little wings when I fly.

The President. So you have the jacket. I will tell you, though, Malia and Sasha, my daughters, they're just not as impressed. The first time we went on Marine One—right, you've got the marines in front and they're saluting you, and we go up, and we're passing the Washington Monument, circling around on the way to Camp David, and Sasha looks over and she says, "Are those Starbursts?" [*Laughter*] There's, like, the candy in the little canister. [*Laughter*] That's—"Can we have some?" [*Laughter*] So they're splitting up the Starbursts, and we're flying over the Lincoln Memorial. And that—so they got a whole 'nother level of cool. [*Laughter*]

The President's Sporting Activities

Mr. Leno. Now, are they going to put a basketball—I imagine the bowling alley has been just burned and closed down.

The President. No, no. I have been practicing bowling. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. Really? Really?

The President. I bowled a 129. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. Oh, no, that's very good. Yes. No, that's very good, Mr. President.

The President. It's like—it was like Special Olympics or something. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. No, that's very good.

The President. No, listen, I'm making progress on the bowling, yes.

Mr. Leno. And how about, are you going to put in a basketball court?

The President. Oh, yes. Yes. Well, we have a basketball court already at Camp David. We just had a little rim that was inadequate—[*laughter*]—at the White House now. But there are tennis courts, so we're going to just get those—you know, those rims that you can roll in and out. And then we'll just put them on either end.

The President's Basketball Games/NCAA Basketball's Final Four

Mr. Leno. Let me ask you, when people—"Mr. President, would you like to play?" "Yes, I would." Do they throw the game? Come on. [*Laughter*]

The President. I don't see why they would throw the game, except for all those Secret Service guys with guns around. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. Yes, exactly.

The President. I will say that I don't think I get the hard fouls that I used to. Usually I don't——

Mr. Leno. Yes, Reggie goes, ooh, I missed, ooh. [*Laughter*]

The President. Reggie doesn't do that. This is Reggie Love, my assistant. He played for

Duke, very competitive guy. He doesn't let me win because, as he pointed out, if you lose to Obama you never hear the end of it. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. See, there you go. Now, have you picked your final four?

The President. I did.

Mr. Leno. Okay. How about your final one, who do you got?

The President. I got North Carolina Tar Heels.

Mr. Leno. North Carolina.

The President. That's what I got. I think I got a hard time from Reggie, because he played at Duke, and you know, Coach K, being competitive, I think was a little—you know, pushed back a little bit today. And I understand that. That's what you want. You want everybody to be competitive. I think these are all great teams.

Mr. Leno. Like, do you look at the whole picture when you do that? For example, isn't that a swing State? [*Laughter*] I'm just saying, are you looking at the whole picture when you pick?

The President. I mean, the fact that teams from North Carolina, Indiana, Iowa, all seem to do well in my bracket—[*laughter*]—I think is a complete coincidence. Absolutely.

The First Family's Dog

Mr. Leno. All right, one last question. Now, when is the dog coming? I keep hearing about the dog. It seems to me—when was the dog supposed to be there by? Wasn't it—I thought it was, like, as soon as——

The President. Listen, this is Washington. [*Laughter*] That was a campaign promise. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. Oh, wow. Wow. Man. [*Laughter*]

The President. I'm teasing. The dog will be there shortly. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. Now what kind of dog?

The President. We have actually sort of been laying the groundwork here. We've got a trip—I've got to go to the NATO summit. When we get back, dog will be in place.

Mr. Leno. Wow. And it's, what, a Portuguese water head? [*Laughter*] What is it, what kind of dog is it?

The President. It's not that. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. It's not that.

The President. It's not a "water head." [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. Whatever they are, I don't know what they are.

The President. That sounds like a scary dog—[*laughter*]—sort of dripping around the house. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. I don't know what it is.

The President. No, no. We're going to get a dog that is—that I think the girls will have a great time—I think I'm going to have a lot of fun with it. You know, they say, if you want a friend in Washington, get a dog. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Leno. Exactly. Mr. President, I must say, this has been one of the best nights of my life. Thank you very much, sir.

The President of the United States.

NOTE: The interview began at 4:22 p.m. at NBC Studios. In his remarks, the President referred to Kevin Eubanks, music director, "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno"; Simon Cowell, judge, "American Idol"; Edward Liddy, chief executive officer, American International Group, Inc.; former stock broker Bernard Madoff, who was convicted of 11 felonies, including securities fraud and money laundering, on March 12; and Mike Krzyzewski, coach, Duke University's men's basketball team.

Statement on House of Representative Passage of Legislation to Tax Bonuses for Certain Employees of Companies Receiving Troubled Asset Relief Program Money

March 19, 2009

Today's vote rightly reflects the outrage that so many feel over the lavish bonuses that AIG provided its employees at the expense of the taxpayers who have kept this failed company afloat. Now this legislation moves to the Senate, and I look forward to receiving a final product

that will serve as a strong signal to the executives who run these firms that such compensation will not be tolerated.

In the end, this is a symptom of a larger problem, a bubble and bust economy that valued reckless speculation over responsibility and hard work. That is what we must ultimately repair to build a lasting and widespread prosperity.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 1586.

Remarks to the National Conference of State Legislatures
March 20, 2009

Thank you so much. Please, everybody have a seat. Thank you so much. It is wonderful to see so many of you, a lot of old friends who I saw on the campaign trail, had a chance to meet all across the country, and I'm glad we're now gathered together to try to actually get something done.

You know, over the last 2 years during the course of this campaign, one of the things that I saw was how dedicated each and every one of you are to making sure that your States and your constituencies are well served by State government. And part of my job as President is to ensure that we're a good partner with you, because you're where rubber hits the road; you're where people actually see the benefits of a good education and high-quality health care, transportation, energy plans that actually make sense.

And so the purpose, the goal of this meeting is to ensure that we are all on the same page, because our folks are counting on it. And it's helpful for me also to talk to you because you guys see things from outside of Washington. And the more I can break out of the bubble, the better off I am.

Over the last 2 days, I've been traveling in California, talking with Americans about the challenges they're facing as a result of this economic crisis. And these are challenges that all of you know very well. You're on the frontlines of this recession. It's your States that are struggling with shrinking revenues; your budgets are being cut; services that your families depend on in a moment of need are being placed under tremendous strain. And as a former State legislator, I know how difficult your work can be and how important it is to have a strong partner in Washington. I want you to know I'm committed to being that kind of partner.

And that's why we're taking unprecedented steps not just to help your States make it through these difficult times, but to make sure that you come out stronger on the other end, more prosperous than you were before. That's the purpose of the budget that I'm submitting to Congress. It's a budget that makes hard choices about where to save and where to spend. Because of the massive deficit we inherited and the cost of this financial crisis, we are having to go through the books line by line, page by page, so that we can cut our deficit in half by the end of my first term and reduce it by $2 trillion over the next decade.

What we will not cut are investments that will lead to real growth and prosperity over the long term. That's why our budget makes a historic commitment to comprehensive health care reform. That's why it enhances America's competitiveness by reducing our dependence on foreign oil and building on a clean energy economy. And that's why it makes a downpayment on a complete and competitive education for every child in America from the cradle up through the time that they get a career. In short, our budget will strengthen each of our 50 States for generations to come.

And that's also the purpose of the Recovery Act that I signed into law last month. It's a plan that will not only help States and painful budget cuts, but also make a meaningful difference in the lives of Americans across this country. Because of what we did, there will be teachers in the classroom and police on the beat who otherwise wouldn't be pursuing their essential missions. Because of what we did, neighborhood health clinics are creating jobs and providing affordable care to those who need it. And because of what we did, 95 percent of hard-working families will receive a tax

cut, a tax cut that they'll see in their paychecks starting on April 1st. So altogether we expect to create or save 3.5 million jobs, 90 percent of which are in the private sector.

It's the most sweeping recovery plan in our Nation's history, and with a plan of such size comes an obligation to be vigilant with every dime that we spend. That will require all of us—me, Joe, each of you—to hold yourselves accountable. It will require a new level of transparency in how we invest taxpayer dollars. It will require a new sense of responsibility here in Washington, but also in the 50 States. And that's a standard that we've sought to uphold from the very beginning.

That's why I asked Joe to ensure that we are implementing our Recovery Act quickly and implementing it well. That's why I've appointed a proven and aggressive Inspector General to help prevent waste and fraud before it happens and root it out when it does. And that's why, on the very day I signed our Recovery Act into law, we launched a web site called recovery.gov, so that Americans can see where their tax dollars are going and make sure we're delivering results. And 46 States have launched their own web sites—linked to recovery.gov—to help people keep track of how money is being spent down to the local level.

Today, as part of our continuing efforts to make government more accountable, we're taking the next step in implementing the Recovery Act. I'm issuing a directive that will provide guidelines to Federal agencies for what does and what does not constitute an acceptable use of taxpayer money, guidelines that will help ensure that we are proving ourselves worthy of the great trust the American people have placed in us.

That starts with a fundamental commitment. Decisions about how Recovery Act dollars are spent will be based on the merits. Let me repeat that. Decisions about how Recovery money will be spent will be based on the merits. They will not be made as a way of doing favors for lobbyists.

Any lobbyist who wants to talk with a member of my administration about a particular Recovery Act project will have to submit their thoughts in writing, and we will post it on the Internet for all to see. If any member of my administration does meet with a lobbyist about a Recovery Act project, every American will be able to go online and see what that meeting was about. These are unprecedented restrictions that will help ensure that lobbyists don't stand in the way of our recovery.

And this plan cannot and will not be an excuse for waste and abuse. Whenever a project comes up for review, we're going to ask a simple question: Does it advance the core mission of the Recovery Act? Does it jump-start job creation? Does it lay the foundation for lasting prosperity?

The initiatives that will get priority will be ones that have demonstrated how they meet this test, initiatives that maximize the number of jobs we are creating so we can get the most bang out of every taxpayer buck, initiatives that help make health care more affordable and rebuild our crumbling roads and bridges or provide other enduring benefits to the American people.

Now, no plan is perfect. And I can't stand here and promise you that not one single dollar will slip through the cracks. But what I can promise you is that we will do everything in our power to prevent that from happening, which is why we're building on the provisions in the Recovery Act to forbid the use of these funds to build things like dog parks. Now, let me be clear. I don't have anything against dog parks. [*Laughter*] I intend to get a dog. [*Laughter*] What I do oppose is building them with funds from the Recovery Act, because that's not how we'll jump-start job creation, and that's not how we'll put our economy on a firmer footing for the future.

And because I'm not willing to ask all of you to do what I'm not willing to do myself, we're going to set an example here in the White House. Now, I'll give you an example. Recently, a proposal was submitted requesting Recovery Act funds to modernize old electrical and heating systems in the East Wing of the White House. Now, this is a much-needed project that's long overdue, and I hope Congress funds it in the future. But because this request does not meet the high standards that I have set, because it will not create many jobs or advance

our recovery, it will not be funded under the Recovery Act.

So the rules I'm putting in place today will help create a new culture of accountability. And I'm pleased that the U.S. Conference of Mayors has committed to joining us in this effort. I don't need to remind you that the American people are watching what we do. They need this plan to work. They're skeptical, and understandably, because they've seen taxpayer dollars frittered away before. They expect to see their hard-earned money spent efficiently. And this extraordinary moment requires extraordinary responsibilities on all our part. There's little room for error here, especially in a time for crisis.

You know, during World War II, a largely unknown Senator grew concerned that waste, corruption, and scandal threatened to choke off our Nation's war efforts before they'd truly begun. Congress didn't think a whole lot of the matter and granted him far less money than he'd asked for, but this little-known Member of Congress named Harry Truman had the courage of his convictions. So he traveled all across the country, gathered information, holding hundreds of hearings and issuing dozens of reports, and when it was all over, he had saved billions of dollars and deterred corruption and bolstered America's confidence in the conduct of the war.

What Harry Truman understood was that spending tax dollars wisely isn't just about keeping our books straight, it's about fulfilling our obligations as keepers of the public trust. And while I do not know how long the road to recovery will be, I do know that we're in a fight right now to get this economy back on track. And if we act with the same sense of responsibility that Harry Truman showed during wartime all those years ago, and if we build a partnership that stretches from the statehouse to the White House, then we'll turn this economy around and the American people will emerge from this crisis stronger than we were before.

So thank you very much. I'm looking forward to working with you. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:55 p.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Vice President Joe Biden; and Interior Department Inspector General Earl E. Devaney, Chair, Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting on Transportation Infrastructure
March 20, 2009

Hey, guys. Good to see you. Well, I am thrilled to have three of the most innovative elected officials in the country, representing not only a wide range of political spectrums, but also different States, different responsibilities, all of whom are concerned about the issue of our infrastructure and how we develop the long-term prosperity that's going to be so important for America's success.

And I'm confident that with all these bright minds sitting around the table, that we're going to not only continue the progress that's been made in the Recovery Act, but we're going to be able to get a budget passed that reflects our—the concerns that we're hearing around the table. And that we're going to be able to, on the highway reauthorization act, we're also going to be able to build in some innovative approaches that will make a lot of difference and spur the kind of job creation, economic growth, and development that we all want to see.

All right. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:25 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Arnold A. Schwarzenegger of California; Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg of New York City; and Gov. Edward G. Rendell of Pennsylvania.

Videotaped Remarks on the Observance of Nowruz
March 20, 2009

Today I want to extend my very best wishes to all who are celebrating Nowruz around the world. This holiday is both an ancient ritual and a moment of renewal, and I hope that you enjoy this special time of year with friends and family.

In particular, I would like to speak directly to the people and leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Nowruz is just one part of your great and celebrated culture. Over many centuries, your art, your music, literature, and innovation have made the world a better and more beautiful place.

Here in the United States, our own communities have been enhanced by the contributions of Iranian Americans. We know that you are a great civilization, and your accomplishments have earned the respect of the United States and the world.

For nearly three decades, relations between our nations have been strained. But at this holiday we are reminded of the common humanity that binds us together. Indeed, you will be celebrating your New Year in much the same way that we Americans mark our holidays, by gathering with friends and family, exchanging gifts and stories, and looking to the future with a renewed sense of hope.

Within these celebrations lies the promise of a new day, the promise of opportunity for our children, security for our families, progress for our communities, and peace between nations. Those are shared hopes; those are common dreams.

So in this season of new beginnings, I would like to speak clearly to Iran's leaders: We have serious differences that have grown over time. My administration is now committed to diplomacy that addresses the full range of issues before us and to pursuing constructive ties among the United States, Iran, and the international community. This process will not be advanced by threats. We seek instead engagement that is honest and grounded in mutual respect.

You, too, have a choice. The United States wants the Islamic Republic of Iran to take its rightful place in the community of nations. You have that right, but it comes with real responsibilities, and that place cannot be reached through terror or arms, but rather through peaceful actions that demonstrate the true greatness of the Iranian people and civilization. And the measure of that greatness is not the capacity to destroy, it is your demonstrated ability to build and create.

So on the occasion of your New Year, I want you, the people and leaders of Iran, to understand the future that we seek. It's a future with renewed exchanges among our people and greater opportunities for partnership and commerce. It's a future where the old divisions are overcome, where you and all of your neighbors and the wider world can live in greater security and greater peace.

I know that this won't be reached easily. There are those who insist that we be defined by our differences. But let us remember the words that were written by the poet Saadi so many years ago: "The children of Adam are limbs to each other, having been created of one essence."

With the coming of a new season, we're reminded of this precious humanity that we all share. And we can once again call upon this spirit as we seek the promise of a new beginning.

Thank you, and *Eid-eh Shoma Mobarak*.

NOTE: The President's remarks were videotaped at 12:20 p.m. on March 18 in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Persian language transcript of these remarks.

The President's Weekly Address
March 21, 2009

Last week, I spent a few days in California talking with ordinary Americans in town halls and in the places where they work. We talked about their struggles, and we talked about their hopes. At the end of the day, these men and women weren't as concerned with the news of the day in Washington as they were about the very real and very serious challenges their families face every day: whether they'll have a job and a paycheck to count on; whether they'll be able to pay their medical bills or afford college tuition; whether they'll be able to leave their children a world that's safer and more prosperous than the one we have now.

Those are the concerns I heard about in California. They are the concerns I've heard about in letters from people throughout this country for the last 2 years, and they are the concerns addressed in the budget I sent to Congress last month.

With the magnitude of the challenges we face, I don't just view this budget as numbers on a page or a laundry list of programs. It's an economic blueprint for our future, a vision of America where growth is not based on real estate bubbles or overleveraged banks, but on a firm foundation of investments in energy, education, and health care that will lead to a real and lasting prosperity.

These investments are not a wish list of priorities that I picked out of thin air, they are a central part of a comprehensive strategy to grow this economy by attacking the very problems that have dragged it down for too long: the high cost of health care and our dependence on foreign oil; our education deficit and our fiscal deficit.

Now, as the House and the Senate take up this budget next week, the specific details and dollar amounts in this budget will undoubtedly change; that's a normal and healthy part of the process. But when all is said and done, I expect a budget that meets four basic principles.

First, it must reduce our dependence on dangerous foreign oil and finally put this Nation on a path to a clean, renewable energy future. There is no longer a doubt that the jobs and industries of tomorrow will involve harnessing renewable sources of energy. The only question is whether America will lead that future. I believe we can and we will, and that's why we've proposed a budget that makes clean energy the profitable kind of energy, while investing in technologies like wind power and solar power, advanced biofuels, clean coal, and fuel-efficient cars and trucks that can be built right here in America.

Second, this budget must renew our Nation's commitment to a complete and competitive education for every American child. In this global economy, we know the countries that out-educate us today will outcompete us tomorrow, and we know that our students are already falling behind their counterparts in places like China. That is why we have proposed investments in childhood education programs that work, in high standards and accountability for our schools, in rewards for teachers who succeed, and in affordable college education for anyone who wants to go. It is time to demand excellence from our schools so that we can finally prepare our workforce for a 21st century economy.

Third, we need a budget that makes a serious investment in health care reform, reform that will bring down costs, ensure quality, and guarantee people their choice of doctors and hospitals. Right now, there are millions of Americans where just one illness or medical emergency away from bankruptcy. There are businesses that have been forced to close their doors or ship jobs overseas because they can't afford insurance. Medicare costs are consuming our Federal budget; Medicaid is overwhelming our State budgets. So to those who say we have to choose between health care reform and fiscal discipline, I say that making investments now that will dramatically lower health care costs for everyone won't add to our budget deficit in the long term; it is one of the best ways to reduce it.

Finally, this budget must reduce that deficit even further. With the fiscal mess we've inherited and the cost of this financial crisis, I've

proposed a budget that cuts our deficit in half by the end of my first term. That's why we are scouring every corner of the budget and have proposed $2 trillion in deficit reductions over the next decade. In total, our budget would bring discretionary spending for domestic programs as a share of the economy to its lowest level in nearly half a century. And we will continue making these tough choices in the months and years ahead so that as our economy recovers, we do what we must to bring down this deficit.

I'll be discussing each of these principles next week, as Congress takes up the important work of debating this budget. I realize there are those who say these plans are too ambitious to enact. To that I say that the challenges we face are too large to ignore. I didn't come here to pass on our problems to the next President or the next generation; I came here to solve them.

The American people sent us here to get things done, and at this moment of great challenge, they are watching and waiting for us to lead. Let's show them that we are equal to the task before us, and let's pass a budget that puts this Nation on the road to lasting prosperity.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:30 p.m. on March 20 in the Library at the White House for broadcast on March 21. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 20 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 21.

Statement on France's Decision to Participate in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Military Command
March 21, 2009

I enthusiastically welcome the decision made by French President Nicolas Sarkozy to fully reintegrate France into the NATO alliance. President Sarkozy's leadership has been essential and is much appreciated. France is a founding member of NATO and has been a strong contributor to NATO missions throughout the alliance's history. France's full participation in the NATO military command structure will further contribute to a stronger alliance and a stronger Europe. The NATO alliance has been the cornerstone of transatlantic security for the past 60 years. The United States is committed to its success and knows that it is through close cooperation with allies and partners that we can overcome our most difficult challenges. In this context, I also welcome the further strengthening of European defense capabilities. During my upcoming visit to France and Germany for the 60th anniversary NATO summit, I look forward to discussing ways to ensure that our strengthened alliance, with France as a full participant in all its structures, will be as important in the 21st century as it was in the 20th century.

Memorandum on Deferred Enforced Departure for Liberians
March 20, 2009

Memorandum for the Secretary of Homeland Security

Subject: Deferred Enforced Departure for Liberians

Since 1991, the United States has provided safe haven for Liberians who were forced to flee their country as a result of armed conflict and widespread civil strife, in part through granting Temporary Protected Status (TPS). The armed conflict ended in 2003 and conditions improved such that TPS ended effective October 1, 2007. President Bush then deferred the enforced departure of the Liberians originally granted TPS. That grant of Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) expires on March 31, 2009. I have determined that there are compelling foreign policy reasons to extend DED to those Liberians presently residing in the United States under the existing grant of DED.

Pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct the foreign relations of the United States, I have determined that it is in the foreign policy interest of the United States to defer for 12 months the removal of any Liberian national, or person without nationality who last habitually resided in Liberia, who is present in the United States and who is under a grant of DED as of March 31, 2009. The grant of DED only applies to an individual who has continuously resided in the United States since October 1, 2002, except for Liberian nationals, or persons without nationality who last habitually resided in Liberia:

(1) who are ineligible for TPS for the reasons provided in section 244(c)(2)(B) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. 1254a(c)(2)(B);

(2) whose removal you determine is in the interest of the United States;

(3) whose presence or activities in the United States the Secretary of State has reasonable grounds to believe would have potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the United States;

(4) who have voluntarily returned to Liberia or his or her country of last habitual residence outside the United States;

(5) who were deported, excluded, or removed prior to the date of this memorandum; or

(6) who are subject to extradition.

Accordingly, I direct you to take the necessary steps to implement for eligible Liberians:

(1) a deferral of enforced departure from the United States for 12 months from March 31, 2009; and

(2) authorization for employment for 12 months from March 31, 2009.

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 23.

Remarks Following an Economic Briefing and an Exchange With Reporters
March 23, 2009

The President. Well, good morning. As all of you know, we have been busy on a whole host of fronts over the last several weeks with the primary purpose of stabilizing the financial system so banks are lending again; so that the secondary markets are working again in order to make sure that families can get basic consumer loans, auto loans, student loans; that small businesses are able to finance themselves; and we can start getting this economy moving again.

As I've said before, there are a number of legs in the stool in the economic recovery. Step one was making sure that we had a stimulus package that was robust enough to fill the huge gap in demand that was created by the recession. Step two was making sure that we had a effective homeowners' plan to try to keep people in their homes and to stabilize the housing market. Because of the work that's already been done, you are starting to see glimmers of hope in the housing market that stabilization may be taking place. Mortgage rates are at a very, very low level, and you're starting to see some activity in the housing market.

We then took a series of steps to improve liquidity in what had been secondary markets that had been completely frozen. And we are now seeing activity in student loans and auto loans. We announced last week a small-business initiative that ensures that we have more activity and you start seeing small businesses being able to get credit again in order to sell products and services and make payroll.

And this morning Secretary Geithner announced the latest element in this multipronged approach. And that is a mechanism that he, in close consultation with the Federal Reserve and the FDIC, has initiated in order to allow banks to take some of their bad assets off their books, sell them into a market, but do so in a way that doesn't just obligate taxpayers to buy at whatever price they're willing to sell these assets; instead, involves a public-private partnership that allows market participants who have every interest in making a profit to

accurately price these assets so that the taxpayers share in the upside as well as the downside.

And we believe that this is one more element that is going to be absolutely critical in getting credit flowing again. It's not going to happen overnight. There's still great fragility in the financial systems. But we think that we are moving in the right direction. And we are very confident that in coordination with the Federal Reserve and the FDIC, other relevant institutions, that we are going to be able to not only start unlocking these credit markets, but we're also going to be in a position to design the regulatory authorities that are necessary to prevent this kind of systemic crisis from happening again.

And I'm looking forward to traveling to the G–20 so that we ensure that the activities that we're doing here in the United States are effectively matched with comparable action in other countries. And Secretary Geithner has already traveled and met with the finance ministers of the G–20 states so that we can make sure that we're all moving on the same page.

So the good news is that we have one more critical element in our recovery. But we've still got a long way to go, and we've got a lot of work to do. But I'm very confident that, with the team that we've got assembled, we're going to be able to make it happen.

All right. Thank you guys.

Discussion of the National Economy

Q. Mr. President, can you offer any assurances to taxpayers who are skeptical?

The President. You know, I'll have a full press conference tomorrow night, and you guys are going to be able to go at it.

All right. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:57 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner.

Remarks on Energy
March 23, 2009

The President. Thank you, Paul, for talking about the work that you're doing at Serious Materials. And thank you, Susan, for describing the research that's taking place under your leadership at MIT. I have to say that Susan made sure to tell me not to touch anything on the table. [*Laughter*] So—I was going to do some experiments for you today—[*laughter*]—but we decided not to.

Finally, I'd like to thank everyone who's here today for joining us this afternoon. And I want to introduce a few people on our team that are critical to this effort. As was already mentioned, John Holdren has now been confirmed our White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. Carol Browner is here, assistant to me for energy and climate change. And behind her is Nancy Sutley, who is the Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality. So thanks to them, thanks to all of you for coming; welcome to the White House.

We gather at a challenging time for our country. We face an economic crisis unlike any we've known in a generation. We've lost 4.4 million jobs since this recession began. Millions of families are at risk of losing their homes, and tens of millions more have lost value in their homes. Our financial system has been severely undermined by the collapse of a credit bubble that was—is as irresponsible as it was unsustainable.

Now, many of you in this room, I know, are experiencing this crisis in one way or another. Perhaps you've won fewer investors than you'd hoped, or you've earned lower revenues than you expected; perhaps your share price has fallen or the cost of securing a loan has risen.

But you're also helping us to overcome this crisis. Paul's company, Serious Materials, just reopened, as he mentioned, a manufacturing plant outside of Pittsburgh. Last year, that factory was shuttered and more than 100 jobs were lost. The town was devastated. Today, that factory is whirring back to life, and Serious Materials is rehiring the folks who lost their jobs. And these workers will now have a new mission

producing some of the most energy efficient windows in the world.

We've got other examples in this room. Deepika Singh—where is Deepika, is she here? There you are, right there. Deepika is here from Gainesville, Florida. She's the founder and president of Sinmat—did I pronounce that correctly?—that's developing new ways to manufacture microchips that can help power smarter energy systems, from more fuel-efficient hybrid cars to more responsive, efficient lighting for homes and businesses.

So these are the stories that are being told all across our country. I remember during the campaign I visited McKinstry Company in Seattle, which is retrofitting schools and businesses to make them more energy efficient. McKinstry is expanding and expects to hire as many as 500 new workers in the next few years. I visited another company, PV Powered, a company developing more reliable solar technology in Bend, Oregon, and then there was Bombard Electric in Las Vegas, which is building up Nevada's renewable energy capacity.

And just last week, I visited the Electric Vehicle Technical Center in Pomona, California, which is testing batteries to power a new generation of plug-in hybrids that will help end our dependence on foreign oil. I have to say, Susan, the battery I saw was bigger than that one that's on the desk—[*laughter*]—but that may be the direction we're moving.

So innovators like you are creating the jobs that will foster our recovery and creating the technologies that will power our long-term prosperity. So I thank you for your work. It's said that necessity is the mother of invention. At this moment of necessity, we need you. We need some inventiveness. Your country needs you to create new jobs and lead new industries. Your country needs you to mount a historic effort to end once and for all our dependence on foreign oil.

And in this difficult endeavor, in this pursuit on which I believe our future depends, your country will support you. Your President will support you. My administration has begun implementing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which will create or save 3.5 million jobs, and 90 percent of those will be in the private sector. Through $59 billion invested in clean energy and in tax incentives to promote clean energy, the Recovery Act is estimated to create more than 300,000 jobs.

And these are jobs that will be created as we double our country's supply of renewable energy and make the largest investment in basic research funding in American history. These are jobs developing new batteries to power the next generation of plug-in hybrid cars, like those being tested at the facility I visited in California last week. These are jobs upgrading our power grid so that it can carry renewable energy from the far-flung places that—where it's produced to the cities that use it.

And these are jobs that will be created through today's announced $1.2 billion for research through the Department of Energy's national labs. As we speak, my Secretary of Energy, Steven Chu, is visiting Brookhaven National Laboratory on Long Island, where recovery funds will speed construction of a laboratory that will help develop materials for new solar cells and other clean energy technologies.

Through this plan, we have achieved more in 2 months in support of a new, clean energy economy than we've achieved in perhaps 30 years. And the budget I've proposed builds on this foundation. The budget is a comprehensive strategy to grow this economy. We will attack the problems that have held us back for too long: the high cost of health care, the budget deficit, our broken education system, and our energy dependence.

We have a choice. We can choose to do what we've done. We can leave these problems for the next budget or the next administration, but more likely for the next generation. But we've seen the consequences of this failure to take responsibility, this failure to seize the moment. We've seen the cycles of boom and bust. We've seen our dependence on foreign oil rise. We've seen health care premiums nearly double over the past 8 years. We've seen our schools fall short. In other words, we've seen enough.

We can remain the world's leading importer of foreign oil, or we can become the world's

leading exporter of renewable energy. We can allow climate change to wreck unnatural havoc, or we can create jobs preventing its worst effects. We can hand over the jobs of the 21st century to our competitors, or we can create those jobs right here in America.

We know the right choice. We have known the right choice for a generation. The time has come to make that choice, to act on what we know. And that's why my budget makes a historic investment: $150 billion over 10 years in clean energy and energy efficiency, building on what we've achieved through the recovery plan.

And it includes a 10-year commitment to make the research and experimentation tax credit permanent. This is a tax credit that Serious Materials has used to grow its business, and one I'm sure others here today have used as well. This is a tax credit that returns $2 to the economy for every dollar we spend. Yet over the years, we've allowed this credit to lapse or we've extended it year to year, even just a few months at a time. Under my budget, this tax credit will no longer fall prey to the whims of politics and partisanship. It will be far more effective when businesses like yours can count on it, when you've got some stability and reliability.

I've also proposed reducing to zero the capital gains tax for investments in small or startup businesses, expanding and making permanent one of the tax cuts in the recovery plan. And Federal agencies will continue to set aside a portion of R&D budgets for small businesses, because small businesses are innovative businesses, producing 13 times more patents per employee than large companies.

Finally, building on the recovery plan my administration is implementing and the budget I have proposed, we will be pursuing comprehensive legislation to finally end our addiction to foreign oil and prevent the worst consequences of climate change, while creating the incentives to finally make clean energy the profitable kind of energy in America.

And we know how much promise this holds. Orion Energy Systems is a perfect example, which Neal Verfuerth—did I say that, Neal, properly?

Neal Verfuerth. Yes, sir.

The President. Is that you right there?

Mr. Verfuerth. Yes, sir.

The President. Okay. Neal just spoke to you about this. Orion employs more than 250 people providing energy-saving lighting to Fortune 500 companies. And it recently began work on a new 70,000 square foot office and technology center.

Long before this success, Neal had tried his hands at clean energy. He bought two solar panel distributorships, but the manufacturing companies he depended on went under. Years later, he started Orion as a distributor for lighting systems, growing with the help of loans through the Small Business Administration.

Then, about 10 years ago, he had an idea. It was in the middle of the night, but Neal hopped in his car and drove to a factory in Plymouth. And this was one of those moments when the future refused to wait until morning. [*Laughter*] He grabbed 2 by 4s and a broom handle; he tinkered until somebody else arrived. He had finally figured out a design for a new lighting fixture that made it possible to produce twice the light using half the energy.

But as Neal will tell you, this is when the real work began seeking capital, seeking customers, seeking the support that would allow him to test and improve and perfect what he had designed. And that took time, and that took patience, and it took creativity.

Progress is rarely easy, and I know people in this room understand that. Sometimes it takes months to learn that your ideas just won't work or years to learn that it will. Sometimes the funding dries up or the investors walk away. Sometimes you have to fail before you can succeed. And often it takes not just the commitment of an innovator, but the commitment of a country to innovation. Often, what's required is the support of government, recognizing that our future is what we make of it; our future is what we build it to be.

So all of you, you are helping us to build a cleaner, brighter future, and a stronger, more prosperous economy. And my administration and our country will support you in that difficult work.

Thank you.

By the way, I was just thinking about it; I suspect this is "Orion" as opposed to "Orien,"

but—[*laughter*]—the way it was written up. I just wanted to make sure while I was giving you a plug that—[*laughter*]—we got the right plug, all right. It's "Orion."

All right. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1 p.m. in Room 450 in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Paul Holland, vice chairman of the board, Serious Materials, Inc.; Susan Hockfield, president, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MA; John P. Holdren, Director, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy; and Neal Verfuerth, president and chief executive officer, Orion Energy Systems.

Question-and-Answer Session With Crewmembers of the International Space Station and Space Shuttle *Discovery*
March 24, 2009

The President. Hello, Commander, can you hear us?

Commander Mike Fincke. Welcome aboard the International Space Station, where we're joined with our international crew from the Space Shuttle *Discovery*. Welcome aboard. Glad to hear your voice. We hear you loud and clear, sir.

The President. Well, thank you so much for taking the time to speak with us. We've got a crew of wonderful schoolchildren here who are all interested in space, and we've got some Members of Congress who are like big kids when it comes to talking to astronauts.

I'm told that you're cruising at about 17,000 miles per hour, so we're glad that you are using the hands-free phone. [*Laughter*]

Commander Fincke. Mr. President, we go around the planet once every 90 minutes. It's quite a thrill, and it is very fast, and we see 16 sunrises and 16 sunsets every day.

The President. That is unbelievable. Well, the first thing we want to do is just let you know how proud we are of you. I've got to say especially once I found out that you're from Bellwood, Illinois.

Mission Specialist Sandra Magnus. Mr. President, it was a beautiful place to grow up, and I have a lot of roots that are still there.

International Space Station/Solar Panels

The President. Well, that's great. The—we are really excited about the project that you're doing. My understanding is, is that you are installing some additional solar panels on the space station, and that's actually going to increase the number of people that can work out of the space station, is that correct?

Mission Specialist John Phillips. Sir, that's correct. We've roughly doubled the amount of solar power available for experimentation and for supporting a larger crew, and we hope to go to a crew of six and a more aggressive experimental program this year.

The President. Well, this is really exciting, because we're investing back here on the ground a whole array of solar and other renewable energy projects, and so to find out that you're doing this up at the space station is particularly exciting.

Can I ask how exactly do you end up installing these solar panels? What's involved? Somebody want to give us a rundown on how you go about doing it?

Mission Specialist Steven Swanson. Yes, sir. First it comes up on a truss segment that is about 5-feet long. We use a robotic arm to attach it to the—into another truss segment. And then once that's attached and bolted on through spacewalks, then we'll go ahead and unfurl or actually deploy the solar arrays in a position so that we can unfurl them from inside during the commanding through software.

The President. About how long does it take?

Mission Specialist Swanson. It takes a lot if you put it all together, about 6 hours, but if you actually do the commanding to actually deploy them out to their full length—only takes about 2 hours.

International Cooperation in Space

The President. Well, obviously we're really proud about the extraordinary work that our American astronauts are doing. You are representative of the dedication and sense of adventure and discovery that we're so proud of. But one of the things that's wonderful about this is that it is an international space station. And I know that we have our Japanese and Russian counterparts on board as well. We'd love to say hello to them and hope that this is an example of the kind of spirit of cooperation that we can apply not just in space, but here on the ground as well.

Mission Specialist Koichi Wakata. Yes, it's an honor to have a chance to talk with you, Mr. President. We have a Russian crewmember, American crewmember, and I'm from Japan. And we have 15 countries working together in this wonderful project—international space station, as well as on the ground, in space. And this really symbolizes the future of the scientific development of the world, and I'm just happy to be part of this.

The President. That's wonderful.

Flight Engineer Yury Lonchkov. Mr. President, we work together to do everything. It's really, really important for us. And American, Russian, Japanese, Italian, everybody, people, all people, work together.

Working in Space/Talking to Schools

The President. Now, I notice you're bouncing around quite a bit there, guys. Are you wearing something to strap you down, or are you about to float away?

Commander Fincke. Mr. President, we're just holding on with our toes on to some handrails below us, and at any moment we could all just easily float up. And that's one of the fun things about flying in space; we get a chance to talk to a lot of kids and show them all the adventures that we have flying around. It's also—it's not just a lot of fun, it's a little bit tough on our bodies; you have to exercise. And so we get a chance to talk to a lot of schools while we're up here—schools all over the planet—to help inspire the next generation.

The President. Yes, I hear that you're going to be talking to my alma mater, Punahou School, when you fly over Hawaii.

Commander Fincke. We're looking forward to that, sir.

The President. All right, well, you tell them *aloha*.

Listen, we've got a bunch of young people here. I want to see if any of them have some questions.

Anybody have a question over here? Okay, this—hold on, we've got a young lady right here who's got a question.

Astronaut Diets

Q. As a astronaut, what do you eat?

The President. Did you hear that question? They want to know what you guys are eating up there.

Mission Specialist Richard Arnold. We're eating really well. We eat a lot of—it's prepared at NASA, but it's kind of like the backpacking food. It's dehydrated, re-rehydrated, and warm it up. We also use—have food similar to Meals Ready to Eat that they use for the military and that a few of us ate last year when the hurricane came through Houston.

The President. Do you guys still drink Tang up there? [*Laughter*] I've got Bill Nelson here, and he says that that's been taken off the menu. [*Laughter*] Any—that's, by the way, before the time of you young people. We used to drink Tang. [*Laughter*]

We've got a young man right here. Hold on one second.

Down Time in Space

Q. Can you play video games in space?

The President. Can you play video games in space?

Mission Specialist Phillips. We can, in fact. And in fact, a few years ago when I was up here for 6 months, I had a video game that I used to play in my spare time, although, unfortunately, we don't have much spare time. So we can; we have a lot of laptop computers. But for the most part we stay real busy doing real work.

Experiments

The President. The—so tell us what kinds of experiments are you doing? Once you got the panel up, what kinds of other activities are you doing? Is it mostly just maintaining the craft, or are there certain experiments or projects that you're engaged in as well?

Mission Specialist Magnus. Well, sir, we have experiments already up here that we've been doing for many years, and we'll be able to double that with the addition of the full array that our shuttle friends brought up.

We do a lot of experiments on combustion, understanding materials, understanding how—you know, we're guinea pigs—so understanding how people's bodies change in space, and all this is in preparation for long-duration missions to the Moon and Mars.

And the exciting thing about doing science up here is we really don't know what we don't know, and that gives you the greatest potential for learning. And we've had a lot of cases where people have set up experiments, and we've conducted them here on the space station, only to find out that we've learned something new, something more about the fundamentals of the processes and the science. So it's a really great place to learn a lot.

The President. Outstanding.

Any of the young people have another question—this young man right here? Hold on one second.

Discoveries

Q. Have you found any life forms or any plants out in space?

The President. That's a good question. Any life forms out there other than you guys?

Mission Specialist Magnus. We're actually doing an experiment on this mission to take a swab or a sample of the surface of the EVA, the spacewalker's gloves, both before and after the space walk. And that's a—that was sort of a demonstration of the type of technology that we'll be able to use on the Moon and Mars for the same purpose, to try and see if we can determine what sort of bacteria or microorganisms are living in the various environments we're going to encounter.

We, unfortunately, haven't really found anything here. I think we'll have much more success at finding new types of life and different structures when we go to places like Moon and Mars and moons of Titan and these other types of environments.

The President. Excellent question. All right, I've got a young man back here.

Astronaut Training

Q. What things did you have to study to be a astronaut?

The President. All right, that's a good question. You guys are all extraordinarily trained. What—if we've got some budding astronauts over here, what should they be doing? I'm assuming they better hit the books on science and math.

Pilot Dominic "Tony" Antonelli. That's—you got it just right. The—one of the beautiful things about getting to work here is you can study just about anything that you're really interested in—science and math being a big part of it. But we have medical doctors, geologists, engineers, and physicists in the group here with us. So it's pretty much anything in the math and science field. We've got a couple of schoolteachers here with us so—studying education as well as the math and science.

But there really is room up here for everybody. The important part, though, is to work really hard and do well in school. It will make a difference in your future.

Physical Fitness Requirements

The President. And what about—what about fitness requirements these days? Some of us remember watching "The Right Stuff," where—that's pretty impressive. [*Laughter*] Is there a particular——

Commander Lee Archambault. Well, Mr. President, the fitness requirements are still——

The President. Go ahead. Go ahead, I'm sorry.

Commander Archambault. Mr. President, the fitness requirements are still there. As a matter of fact, the International Space Station just recently incorporated a new fitness

machine. It's like—it's a very, very fancy workout machine you see in a gym, but it's called the ARED, and we can do a lot of good exercises on it—the leg—strength training for your legs as well as your upper body. So particularly for the long duration folks, it's very important to maintain your muscles in good tone and to help you readapt when you get back on planet Earth.

The President. Excellent. Okay, there's—a young lady back here had a question.

Exercising in Space

Q. When you say you "exercise," what do you do?

Mission Specialist Joseph Acaba. Well, we have a couple of different exercise machines up here. On the space shuttle we brought up a—it looks like a bicycle that you would find in a gymnasium. So we can use that. And they have one here on the space station.

And the other machine, you can do all kinds of stuff. You can do squats; you can do curls. We have a lot we can do. We also have a treadmill, so you can go ahead and run up here in space.

The President. Any—okay, we've got another question from a young man. Hold on.

Stars/International Cooperation on Space Exploration

Q. Do you know how many stars there are in space?

The President. Asking how many stars in space—I'll be interested in hearing the answer to this one. [*Laughter*]

Commander Fincke. Well, aboard the International Space Station, we can look down and see our beautiful planet Earth, and we can also look up and see the rest of the cosmos. And we can see that there are so many stars out there that it's very hard to count them all. And we can see that our Earth is a very small—very small planet in such a big universe. And it's just really amazing, because it gives us a deep perspective of—that we have to really take good care of our own planet—and that our own planet is just a—is a small place, and we have the whole rest of the universe to work together in an international sense and go explore this whole universe that's in front of us and all the discoveries that we'll make together.

So maybe we'll someday be able to count how many stars that we have, because we're starting to go to the stars as human beings together. And that's what's really exciting about serving aboard the International Space Station and flying up and down on space shuttles, is that we're part of that great adventure.

And we need you kids to study hard, because we can't do it all by ourselves. We really need you guys to work hard and do whatever you're supposed to do and do it well, like Tony said, because there's a whole universe in front of us.

Impact of Weightlessness on Sleep

The President. I had a quick question. Does weightlessness have an impact in terms of your ability to sleep?

Mission Specialist Arnold. Sir, we just arrived here, just a few days ago, and it's taken a while to get used to—for me, personally, missing a pillow. You're used to laying down on a mattress and having a place to rest your head. And—so it's taken a while to get used to that.

The President. Well, the—I know the kids got a chance to ask some questions. I want to make sure that if there are any Members of Congress who've got some questions that they're interested in, that they've got a chance too.

Okay, hold on. This is Kay Bailey Hutchison from Texas.

Salmonella Experiment

Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison. I understand that you are doing experiments on Salmonella and watching those organisms and how they react and grow. And we've had some Salmonella problems here on Earth. What do you think you will be able to learn from the environment in space that maybe you couldn't learn here on Earth?

Mission Specialist Phillips. I'm actually going to have a bit of a hard time answering that question. We do, indeed, have an experiment called the National Laboratory Program vaccine experiment, in which Salmonella are—in which certain micro-organisms are exposed to

Salmonella. My job as an astronaut was basically to turn the crank and activate the experiment, and then after about 4 or 5 days, I turn the crank again and deactivate it.

I'm not exactly sure what the scientists are going to do with the data back at home or with the samples. We are returning, however, eight big vials of samples of these cultures of microorganisms and Salmonella, and let the scientists go to work.

The President. Does Bill Nelson—he knows a little something about this stuff.

International Space Station Laboratory

Senator Bill Nelson. Hey, guys, I wish I were up there with you. You are just getting to the point where it's really looking like a full-up national laboratory where we can really do the experimentation. When will you have it full-up, ready to go, where we can then reap the results of that $100 billion investment?

Commander Fincke. It's nice to hear you again, sir. The International Space Station has already been delivering some of the science we've promised. With—where we are now is—in Expedition 18, our crew, is—we're making the turn from three people to six people. The next crew that comes after us—a few months after we get replaced—will have six people onboard the International Space Station. So that's why we needed the solar power; that's why we needed the second toilet and other things, so that we'd have room and facilities for six people.

And once we have six people, we'll have enough time and energy—solar power, I mean—to run all the experiments that we can. And then it's just a matter of getting enough experiments up and down from the space station to really reap on that science. We've already been delivering, and we've got a lot more to come. And like Sandy said, there's a lot of things we don't know, so there's some really interesting discoveries out in front of us.

The President. Do any of the young people have any more questions? Hold on one second, we've got one here.

Being an Astronaut

Q. Do you love doing your job?

The President. They asked if you love doing your job.

Mission Specialist Wakata. Yes, it's wonderful to work in space. Ever since I saw Apollo 11, the lunar landing, when I was 5-years-old, I always longed for going to space and work. And here dreams came true. I had to study hard and worked hard, but I'm so happy to be here, and I'm loving living here and working with so many wonderful people here.

Time it Takes to Get Into Space

The President. The—just a couple of logistical questions. How long did it take—from the time of launch, how long does it get—does it take to get to the space station?

Commander Archambault. Well, Mr. President, let me answer that in two ways. First of all, it takes us about 8½ minutes to get to orbit, and at that time we're going 17,500 miles an hour. But we're in a bit of a tail chase with the space station, and it's approximately about a day and a half to 2 days later that we actually rejoin with the space station.

The President. Okay, so 8 minutes just to get into orbit, but then you've got to basically try to catch up with the space station and match up so that you can lock in.

Commander Archambault. Sir, that's exactly right.

The President. Okay.

Anybody have any more questions? Hold on one second.

Astronauts' Favorite Experiment

Q. What's your favorite or the most interesting experiment you're working on up at the space station?

The President. Okay, do you guys have a favorite experiment right now?

Mission Specialist Magnus. That's a really tough question, because they're all interesting in different ways. Mike and I were doing a flame experiment where we're trying to help the scientists on the ground understand how fire behaves up here. There's all kinds of

reason for that. So that was interesting because it's sort of an unusual environment to intentionally put a fire.

I think one of the ones I like the most is an experiment that we're doing on ourselves to try and understand how our nutritional state changes and our biochemistry changes, and that will help us design food and understand a little bit more about the processes that the human body undergoes. That's probably my favorite one. But there's all kinds of interesting things in all of the experiments.

Weightlessness

The President. Now, can I ask you a question? Were you tempted to cut your hair shorter while you were up there, or do you—is it fun in weightlessness? [*Laughter*]

Mission Specialist Magnus. Well, that's a really good question, because it is a little bit of an overhead to take care of long hair here. I think ideally a short haircut is the way to go, but quite frankly, on me it wouldn't be so nice, so I kept it long.

The President. I think it's a real fashion statement. [*Laughter*]

Hold on one second, we've got another young man back here.

Spare Time

Q. How much spare time do you have on the day—in the day?

The President. How much spare time do you have? It sounds like you guys are pretty busy.

Mission Specialist Acaba. They do keep us pretty busy up here, and we have a very tight schedule that starts from the moment you wake up until the moment you go to sleep. But they give us a little bit of time in the morning to get yourself ready, get yourself cleaned up, have some breakfast, and the same in the evening. So we can use that time to either call down to our family and friends or maybe even check our e-mail and see how things are going back on Earth.

Communication With Earth

The President. Now, that's interesting. Does e-mail work pretty much the same between the space station and computers here on Earth?

Commander Fincke. Mr. President, as just about everybody on the planet knows, is that e-mail is a pretty important way for us to keep in touch with each other. Even though we're really far away and traveling really fast, we still use e-mail also. Unfortunately, we only synchronize our e-mail once or twice a day, sometimes three times a day. So it's not as fast and instantaneous as we are used to on the ground, but even so, it's a really useful way to get in touch with other people.

In addition, we have kind of an Internet over—voice-over Internet protocol telephone, so it's really nice that we can get the—a chance to talk to our families—not 24/7, but when we do have good satellite coverage we do get the chance to call home. And that's—for those of us who stay up for a long time, that's what's really important to us.

The President. Excellent. All right, well, I know that you guys probably have a whole bunch of stuff to do, but I think that we may have one more question from a Member of Congress. Hold on one second.

Representative Suzanne Kosmas. Thank you very much. My name is Suzanne Kosmas, and I actually represent central Florida, the area that includes the Kennedy Space Center. So I want to first thank you on behalf of all Americans for your service to us and for what you represent in terms of America and our supremacy in space exploration, along with our international partners, and for what you're doing there at the International Space Station.

I had the honor of being at the Kennedy Space Center last week when you took off, and it was a fabulous, absolutely fantastic launch. And we—so I wished you *adieu* from there, and now I'm wishing you hello from here.

I want to thank you again for your service and tell you how excited I am to be representing the Kennedy Space Station and that area, but also for what you do that inspires people to be interested in the science and technology that has led us to this pioneering place where you are. And

the things that we anticipate that we will be able to reap from your service I'm very thrilled about, particularly the idea, as the President has said, of alternative energies and the fact that you're using solar panels in space. What we're hoping, in the long run, that you will be able to, from space, use solar energy to come back to Earth.

And again, I'm thrilled to be here and very excited to have the opportunity to talk to you. And thank you so much for your service to our country.

The President. Well, I think that all of us echo——

Commander Archambault. Thank you, ma'am, we appreciate that. And each one of us here is very lucky and honored to be right where we're at here today, so the honor is all ours. We're honored to be here doing this great work.

The President. Well, I think all of us echo the sentiment. We are extraordinarily proud of you. We're so grateful that you took the time to speak to all of us. I know these young people are pretty excited to be on a direct link with astronauts in space.

So does everybody want to say good-bye?

Audience members. Good-bye.

The President. All right. They're all beaming. And we appreciate you guys, so look forward to seeing you when you're back on the ground. God bless you.

Commander Archambault. Thank you, Mr. President. And on behalf of the Space Shuttle *Discovery* crew here in the dark blue shirts, I want to say we're very honored that you spent some time with us today. It meant a lot to us. We thank you very much.

And from one Chicago guy to another, I wish you well, sir.

The President. That's it.

Commander Archambault. And for closing comments, I'll pass the microphone off to Commander Mike Fincke, the commander of the International Space Station.

The President. Thank you.

Commander Fincke. Mr. President, I'm not from Chicago. I'm sorry about that. But my crew and I were—are really happy to have a chance to talk to you and share our adventure with even more people. It's pretty impressive what human beings can do when we work together constructively and not destructively. And that's the mission of the International Space Station.

So thanks for joining us. Thanks for flying with us at 17,500 miles an hour today. We sure—we're glad to have a chance to share it with you and the distinguished Members from Congress, as well as all the kids out there.

So, everybody, thanks again for joining us.

The President. Thank you, guys. Bye-bye.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:52 a.m. via satellite in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Kevin M. Rudd of Australia and an Exchange With Reporters
March 24, 2009

President Obama. Hello, everybody. It is good to see you. Just had an excellent meeting with Prime Minister Rudd and his team. Obviously, there are very few countries that are closer than the United States and Australia. And Prime Minister Rudd's Government, I think, has shown the kind of vision not just domestically, but on the international stage that we greatly admire.

I expressed thanks to the Government of Australia for everything that it's done with respect to Afghanistan, and we discussed the fact that we're engaged in a strategic review process at this point that will lead, I hope, to a more effective coalition strategy. It's not yet completed, but there's going to be close consultation between our two governments.

We spent the bulk of our time talking about the global financial crisis and what's been happening with respect to our respective economies and the world economy. And in the run-up to the G–20, I feel that there's a great

meeting of the minds between Prime Minister Rudd and myself in terms how we should approach it.

The importance of doing what's necessary to support global demand and job development and economic growth; the importance of a financial regulatory mechanism that prevents the kind of systemic risks that have done so much damage over the last several months; and finally, making sure that, as an international community, we are looking after the severe threat that poor countries, emerging markets, are under as a consequence of this financial crisis, and recognizing that our own growth, our own success in rebounding from this crisis is going to be tied up with what happens around the world. And it's going to be important for the relatively wealthy nations like ours to take leadership in assuring that we don't see a continued downward spiral that has an even more devastating impact in some of these emerging markets.

So I'm very grateful for secretary—or for Prime Minister Rudd's friendship. He has been one of the people who I've called on various occasions to—right after the election and repeatedly over the last several months. I think he's doing a terrific job, and I'm looking forward to partnering him for some years to come.

Prime Minister Rudd. Well, thank you, Mr. President, and it's great to be back in Washington. This alliance of ours between Australia and the United States has been going for about 65 years or so and some 13 U.S. Presidents and 13 Australian Prime Ministers. And it's a first-class alliance, and it's a first-class partnership between our two countries, and the purpose of this visit is to reaffirm it and to examine its future and to work on its future together.

As the President has just indicated, we spent some time talking about our common challenges in Afghanistan. It's important to remind ourselves why we're there, and that is never to forget those who lost their lives on September 11, never forget those who have been killed in terrorist attacks since, never forget that many of those responsible were trained and given support in Afghanistan. And so our mission remains to ensure that that country doesn't become a safe haven for terrorists in the future.

As the President has indicated, we spent a huge part of our time discussing what is a global recession, a global economic crisis coming out of a global financial crisis. And a global recession requires a global solution, and that's why so much of our discussion today focused on common actions we need to take together at the upcoming G–20 summit in London.

I think the actions taken by the U.S. administration and the statement yesterday by Treasury Secretary Geithner on impaired asset management is an important step in the overall road to global economic recovery. And actions of that type in Europe and elsewhere are also necessary parts of our long-term global economic recovery.

I look forward to working with the President in London on the concrete actions that we need to agree on there, stimulating our economies, working on the future of the IMF, and working also on what we do to better regulate the global financial system in the future.

The President and I also had an opportunity to discuss the enduring challenge of climate change, and this is an economic challenge and an environmental challenge. It presents challenges and it presents opportunities. But we look forward very much to partnering with the United States in dealing with this big one for the future.

It's going to be tough, it's going to be hard, it's going to require a lot of political leadership. But with our partners around the world, I think our governments are determined to make a difference and not just to push this one away permanently in the too-hard basket. I think that's good. And I'll just say it's great to have America onboard. It's great to have America onboard on this one.

And, Mr. President, to see the return of U.S. global economic leadership, we appreciate that very much, and it's going to be necessary in the difficult times which lie ahead for us all.

Thank you very much for all your hospitality today.

President Obama. Well, thank you. We've got a couple of questions, so we're going to start with David Alexander [Reuters].

Treasury Department Resolution Authority/ Global Financial Regulations

Q. Yes. Secretary Geithner told Members of Congress this morning that he needs the authority to shut down nonbank financial institutions like AIG when they get into trouble. Should that authority rest with the Treasury Department directly or through an existing regulator? And how long do you think it'll take to convince Congress?

President Obama. Well, I hope it doesn't take too long to convince Congress. I know that Barney Frank, the chairman of the House Financial Services Committee, as well as Chris Dodd on the Senate side, their Republican counterparts, Richard Shelby and Congressman Baucus, were sitting in this room to discuss this issue.

Right now we do not have resolution authority for a nonbank institution like AIG that is comparable to what we have for banks that get into trouble using the FDIC. And in the absence of that capacity, you end up with the situation that we've been in, a systemic—or an institution that poses systemic risks to the system, but a lack of capacity to shut it down in an orderly way, renegotiate contracts, sell off bad assets, and do so in a way that doesn't endanger the entire system.

So we are already hard at work in putting forward a detailed proposal. We will work in consultation with Members of Congress. That will be just one phase of a broader regulatory framework that we're going to have to put in place to prevent these kinds of crises from happening again. And as Prime Minister Rudd and I already discussed, it's going to be important that even as individual countries take actions to prevent these kinds of crises, that our regulations spur a race to the top as opposed to the race—a race to the bottom.

If the major economies aren't coordinating in some fashion, then what you end up having is potential capital fleeing to the places with the least restraint, the least transparency, the least openness. And in a global market with capital flows that end up being in the trillions moving in the blink of an eye, it's very important that this end up being a coordinated effort, and I'm confident that working with people like Prime Minister Rudd, we're going to be able to hammer out a better approach than we've been taking recently.

Prime Minister Rudd. Now on the Australian side, the President's very well prepared; he's got a list of two Australian journalist names there. I do not know who the two American journalists—[*laughter*]—who are the two Australians? Over here.

Global Economy/Energy

Q. Mr. President, subprime loans make up just about 1 percent of Australian mortgages, yet Australians are suffering because of the financial crisis, losing retirement incomes and even losing jobs. What assurances can you give the Australian people that everything you do will work to fix this crisis? And, Prime Minister, how confident are you that the President will be successful?

President Obama. Well, as Prime Minister Rudd indicated, there's a global crisis, and what we've seen is a pattern that's been building up. In this case, subprime lending was the initial trigger, but there's a larger problem, and that is huge unregulated capital flows, a reliance on bubbles as a driver of economic growth. And what we have said is that it is very important us—for us to return to a much more stable approach to economic growth. One that's built on improved education, making sure that we are developing the new clean energies of the future, having a regulatory system in place that protects consumers—in the case of housing, for example, here in the United States, you saw people being peddled loans that they could never hope to pay back—but also protects the system by ensuring that you're not leveraging off of one shaky loan huge numbers of other financial products that ultimately prove to be worthless.

So this whole issue of financial regulation is going to be absolutely critical. We are very confident that we are going to be able to work in concert with the other major economies to stabilize the financial system. I think all of us are going to have a set of challenges. All the—both wealthy countries as well as emerging markets are going to have a challenge in

finding new areas of economic growth that I think are going to be necessary to replace some of the financial shenanigans that have been taking place over the last several years.

One area where we agree there's enormous potential is in the area of clean energy. Both Australia and the United States have vast coal reserves, but we're also very interested in figuring out how do we reduce the greenhouse gases that are causing global warming. If we can take some intelligent steps, and we start to discuss how we could work together on this, figuring out how to sequester and capture the carbon that's emitted from coal, as just one element of a broader range of energy initiatives, that's an example of something that can create jobs—also deal with a potential environmental crisis—that's the kind of economic growth that I think we're going to be looking for.

Prime Minister Rudd. Just on what the President said on jobs coming out of clean energy, I welcome today the fact that President Obama has indicated that the United States will become a partner with Australia and many other governments around the world in the Australian initiative for a global carbon capture and storage institute. And that's going to be welcome around the world. Generating jobs through clean coal and carbon sequestration technologies is critical. It's also critical in terms of bringing down greenhouse gas emissions.

On your broader question about U.S. actions, can I just say this: The central economic problem today is how you restore normal private credit flows across the global economy. And one of the—the significant impediment to that so far around the world has been the problem of impaired assets on the balance sheets of the world's biggest banks.

What you've seen in the United States is decisive action by the administration through the plan further outlined by Secretary Geithner yesterday. This is really important stuff; it's really fundamental stuff. And a framework within which that occurs and is implemented globally—including by our friends in Europe—once done, you actually then can track the pathway to global economic recovery. That's why the statement—the announcement by the Treasury Secretary yesterday is so important and welcomed by us and, as you can see, by markets around the world.

The other thing I'll just say is the stimulus packages by the U.S. Government and—deployed in recent times—is fundamentally important. We are doing things similar in Australia. The International Monetary Fund says we should all be aiming towards generating 2 percent of GDP worth of stimulus over the next couple of years. That's right to provide temporary support for growth and jobs in the period ahead while we're seeing the recovery in credit flows.

So again, in answer to your question, the stimulus package deployed by the U.S. is important not just for this economy, but globally—as are similar actions around the world.

President Obama. Roger [Roger Runningen] from Bloomberg.

International Banking Regulations

Q. Yes. Mr. President, thank you. I'd like to talk about the G–20 a little bit. The French Prime Minister, in a news conference here in Washington this morning, said that you will be supporting tighter international regulations on hedge funds. We've not heard that from you, so is that true, number one? And number two, what exactly do you have in mind?

President Obama. Well, the—I have not seen the quote from the French Foreign [Prime]* Minister, so I don't want to respond to his quote.

Q. Do you want to go for tighter regulations, though?

President Obama. Here's what I've said—and I think Secretary Geithner has indicated as much—is that it is important for us to have a regulatory framework for various flows of capital and financial instruments that could pose a systemic risk to the system.

How we do that—whether it's a matter of each national government dealing with this and then coordinating effectively across borders, how much of it is reporting and disclosure and

* White House correction.

transparency versus restrictions on how these various instruments operate—I think that's all something that needs to be worked out. That's part of the effort that we're going to be initiating here in the United States. We will be discussing it at the G–20.

And I know that this is an area of particular interest to President Sarkozy. I will be speaking with him this week, and our foreign—our respective finance ministers have already spoken. So my expectation is, is that coming out of the G–20, there will be a framework to deal with a whole host of these financial regulatory issues.

Not all of them may get resolved immediately; many of them are highly technical. But I think the important theme to the whole process is going to be making sure that we are not simply regulating the banks under a framework that was created back in the 1930s, at a time when the global financial system has evolved in a thousand different other directions. There's got to be a more comprehensive view than the one that we've been taking so far.

Prime Minister Rudd. Phil Coorey.

Australia's Role in Afghanistan/Military Operations in Afghanistan

Q. Mr. President, Phil Coorey, Sydney Morning Herald. If I could go back to Afghanistan, there's a fair degree of anticipation in Australia that we'll be asked to extend significantly, if not expand, our commitment to the war. There's also dwindling support amongst the Australian people for that sentiment. Could you tell the Australian people on the other side of the Pacific why they should support any such commitment—extended or expanded commitment? And could you offer them any suggestion as to how long that commitment may continue?

President Obama. Well, we are in the process of a strategic review. I don't want to prejudge what is still a work in process. What I shared with Prime Minister Rudd, though, is something that I think the Australian people understand, just as the American people understand, that the threat of terrorist attacks from Al Qaida and their affiliates is not a threat that's going away. We have to take it seriously.

Obviously, the United States has in its memory—what's been burned into our memory is the events of 9/11. But I think the Australian people remember what happened in Bali. That's not something that we will forget. And as a consequence, it's important for us to stay on the offensive and to dismantle these terrorist organizations wherever they are.

It is a difficult task. It's one that requires us to stay focused. It requires effective coordinated action. It requires a recognition that we will not just solve these problems militarily, but we're also going to have to be much more effective diplomatically; we're going to have to be much more effective on the development front. And my expectation would be that over the next several years, you are going to see a more comprehensive strategy, a more focused strategy, a more disciplined strategy to achieve our common goals.

I think the American people, just like the Australian people, are always frustrated with the need to send our young men and women overseas for extended periods of time. Not only does it cost in terms of dollars, it puts enormous strain on families, and some don't return. And that's always something that weighs on the minds of the public. But I think that the American and the Australian people also recognize that in order for us to keep our homelands safe, in order to maintain our way of life, in order to ensure order in—on the international scene, that we can't allow vicious killers to have their way. And we're going to do what's required to ensure that does not happen.

Prime Minister Rudd. Good. Good to see you.

President Obama. Thank you so much. Thank you, everybody. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:25 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Francois Fillon and President Nicolas Sarkozy of France; and Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner.

The President's News Conference
March 24, 2009

The President. Hello, everybody. Please have a seat. Good evening. Before I take questions from the correspondents I want to give everyone who's watching tonight an update on the steps we're taking to move this economy from recession to recovery and ultimately to prosperity.

It's important to remember that this crisis didn't happen overnight, and it didn't result from any one action or decision. It took many years and many failures to lead us here, and it will take many months and many different solutions to lead us out. There are no quick fixes, and there are no silver bullets.

That's why we've put in place a comprehensive strategy designed to attack this crisis on all fronts. It's a strategy to create jobs, to help responsible homeowners, to restart lending, and to grow our economy over the long term. And we're beginning to see signs of progress.

The first step we took was to pass a recovery plan to jump-start job creation and put money in people's pockets. This plan has already saved the jobs of teachers and police officers. It's creating construction jobs to rebuild roads and bridges, and yesterday I met with a man whose company is reopening a factory outside of Pittsburgh that's rehiring workers to build some of the most energy efficient windows in the world. And this plan will provide a tax cut to 95 percent of all working families that will appear in people's paychecks by April 1st.

The second step we took was to launch a plan to stabilize the housing market and help responsible homeowners stay in their homes. This plan is one reason that mortgage interest rates are now at near-historic lows. We've already seen a jump in refinancing of some mortgages as homeowners take advantage of lower rates, and every American should know that up to 40 percent of all mortgages are now eligible for refinancing. This is the equivalent of another tax cut. And we're also beginning to see signs of increased sales and stabilizing home prices for the first time in a very long time.

The third part of our strategy is to restart the flow of credit to families and businesses. To that end, we've launched a program designed to support the market for more affordable auto loans, student loans, and small-business loans, a program that's already securitized more of this lending in the last week than in the last 4 months combined. Yesterday Secretary Geithner announced a new plan that will partner Government resources with private investment to buy up the assets that are preventing our banks from lending money. And we will continue to do whatever is necessary in the weeks ahead to ensure the banks Americans depend on have the money they need to lend even if the economy gets worse.

Finally, the most critical part of our strategy is to ensure that we do not return to an economic cycle of bubble and bust in this country. We know that an economy built on reckless speculation, inflated home prices, and maxed-out credit cards does not create lasting wealth. It creates the illusion of prosperity, and it's endangered us all.

The budget I submitted to Congress will build our economic recovery on a stronger foundation so that we don't face another crisis like this 10 or 20 years from now. We invest in the renewable sources of energy that will lead to new jobs, new businesses, and less dependence on foreign oil. We invest in our schools and our teachers so that our children have the skills they need to compete with any workers in the world. We invest in reform that will bring down the cost of health care for families, businesses, and our Government. And in this budget, we have to make the tough choices necessary to cut our deficit in half by the end of my first term, even under the most pessimistic estimates.

At the end of the day, the best way to bring our deficit down in the long run is not with a budget that continues the very same policies that have led us to a narrow prosperity and massive debt. It's with a budget that leads to broad economic growth by moving from an era of borrow and spend to one where we save and invest.

And that's why clean energy jobs and businesses will do all across America. That's what a

highly skilled workforce can do all across America. That's what an efficient health care system that controls costs and entitlements like Medicare and Medicaid will do. That's why this budget is inseparable from this recovery, because it is what lays the foundation for a secure and lasting prosperity.

The road to that prosperity is still long, and we will hit our share of bumps and setbacks before it ends. But we must remember that we can get there if we travel that road as one nation, as one people. You know, there was a lot of outrage and finger-pointing last week, and much of it is understandable. I'm as angry as anybody about those bonuses that went to some of the very same individuals who brought our financial system to its knees, partly because it's yet another symptom of the culture that led us to this point.

But one of the most important lessons to learn from this crisis is that our economy only works if we recognize that we're all in this together, that we all have responsibilities to each other and to our country. Bankers and executives on Wall Street need to realize that enriching themselves on the taxpayers' dime is inexcusable, that the days of outsized rewards and reckless speculation that puts us all at risk have to be over.

At the same time, the rest of us can't afford to demonize every investor or entrepreneur who seeks to make a profit. That drive is what has always fueled our prosperity, and it is what will ultimately get these banks lending and our economy moving once more.

We'll recover from this recession, but it will take time, it will take patience, and it will take an understanding that when we all work together, when each of us looks beyond our own short-term interest to the wider set of obligations we have towards each other, that's when we succeed; that's when we prosper. And that's what is needed right now. So let's look towards the future with a renewed sense of common purpose, a renewed determination, and most importantly, a renewed confidence that a better day will come.

All right, with that, let me take some questions. And I've got a list here. Let's start off with Jennifer Loven, AP [Associated Press].

Government Role in Reforming Financial Systems

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Your Treasury Secretary and the Fed Chairman were on Capitol Hill today asking for this new authority that you want to regulate big, complex financial institutions. But given the problems that the financial bailout program has had so far—banks not wanting to talk about how they're spending the money, the AIG bonuses that you mentioned—why do you think the public should sign on for another new, sweeping authority for the Government to take over companies, essentially?

The President. Well, keep in mind that it is precisely because of the lack of this authority that the AIG situation has gotten worse. Now, understand that AIG is not a bank, it's an insurance company. If it were a bank and it had effectively collapsed, then the FDIC could step in, as it does with a whole host of banks, as it did with IndyMac, and in a structured way, renegotiate contracts, get rid of bad assets, strengthen capital requirements, resell it on the private marketplace.

So we've got a regular mechanism whereby we deal with FDIC-insured banks. We don't have that same capacity with an institution like AIG, and that's part of the reason why it has proved so problematic. I think a lot of people, understandably, say, "Well, if we're putting all this money in there, and if it's such a big systemic risk to allow AIG to liquidate, why is it that we can't restructure some of these contracts? Why can't we do some of the things that need to be done in a more orderly way?" And the reason is, is because we have not obtained this authority.

We should have obtained it much earlier so that any institution that poses a systemic risk that could bring down the financial system we can handle, and we can do it in an orderly fashion that quarantines it from other institutions. We don't have that power right now. That's what Secretary Geithner was talking about.

And I think that there's going to be strong support from the American people and from Congress to provide that authority so that we

don't find ourselves in a situation where we've got to choose between either allowing an enormous institution like AIG, which is not just insuring other banks, but is also insuring pension funds and potentially putting people's 401(k)s at risk if it goes under; that's one choice. And then the other choice is just to allow them to take taxpayer money without the kind of conditions that we'd like to see on it.

So that's why I think the authority is so important.

Q. Why should the public trust the Government to handle that authority well?

The President. Well, as I said before, if you look at how the FDIC has handled a situation like Indy bank, for example, it actually does these kinds of resolutions effectively when it's got the tools to do it. We don't have the tools right now.

Okay, Chuck Todd [NBC News].

National Economy/Economic Stabilization

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Some have compared this financial crisis to a war, and in times of war past Presidents have called for some form of sacrifice. Some of your programs, whether for Main Street or Wall Street, have actually cushioned the blow for those that were irresponsible during this economic period of prosperity, or supposed prosperity, that you were talking about. Why, given this new era of responsibility that you're asking for, why haven't you asked for something specific that the public should be sacrificing to participate in this economic recovery?

The President. Well, let me take that question in a couple of phases. First of all, it's not true that we have not asked sacrifice from people who are getting taxpayer money. We have imposed some very stiff conditions. The only problem that we've had so far are contracts that were put in place before we took over. But moving forward, anybody—any bank, for example, that is receiving capital from the taxpayers is going to have to have some very strict conditions in terms of how it pays out its executives, how it pays out dividends, how it's reporting its lending practices. So we want to make sure that there are some stiff conditions in place.

With respect to the American people, I think folks are sacrificing left and right. They—you've got a lot of parents who are cutting back on everything to make sure that their kids can still go to college. You've got workers who are deciding to cut an entire day—an entire day's worth of pay so that their fellow coworkers aren't laid off. I think that across the board people are making adjustments, large and small, to accommodate the fact that we're in very difficult times right now.

What I've said here in Washington is that we've got to make some tough choices; we got to make some tough budgetary choices. What we can't do, though, is sacrifice long-term growth, investments that are critical to the future. And that's why my budget focuses on health care, energy, education, the kinds of things that can build a foundation for long-term economic growth, as opposed to the fleeting prosperity that we've seen over the last several years.

I mean, when you have an economy in which the majority of growth is coming from the financial sector, when AIG selling a derivative is counted as an increase in the Gross Domestic Product, then that's not a model for sustainable economic growth. And what we have to do is invest in those things that will allow the American people's capacity for ingenuity and innovation, their ability to take risks but make sure that those risks are grounded in good products and good services that they believe they can market to the rest of the country, that those models of economic growth are what we're promoting. And that's what I think our budget does.

Economic Stabilization/Transparency in Government Spending

Q. But you don't think there should be a specific call to action? I mean, this is—you've described this as a economic crisis like nothing we have seen since the Great Depression.

The President. Well, as I said, the American people are making a host of sacrifices in their individual lives. We are going through an extraordinary crisis, but we believe that taken—if you take the steps that we've already taken with respect to housing, with respect to small businesses, if you look at what we're doing in terms

of increasing liquidity in the financial system, that the steps that we're taking can actually stabilize the economy and get it moving again.

What I'm looking from the American people to do is that they are going to be doing what they've always done, which is working hard, looking after their families, making sure that despite the economic hard times, that they're still contributing to their community, that they're still participating in volunteer activities, that they are paying attention to the debates that are going on in Washington. And the budgets that we're putting forward and some of the decisions that we're having to make are going to be tough decisions, and we're going to need the support of the American people. And that's part of why what I've tried to do is to be out front as much as possible explaining in very clear terms exactly what we're doing.

Jake [Jake Tapper, ABC News].

Federal Budget

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Right now on Capitol Hill Senate Democrats are writing a budget and, according to press accounts and their own statements, they're not including the middle class tax cut that you include in the stimulus; they're talking about phasing that out. They're not including the cap and trade that you have in your budget, and they're not including other measures. I know when you outlined your four priorities over the weekend, a number of these things were not in there. Will you sign a budget if it does not contain a middle class tax cut, does not contain cap and trade?

The President. Well, I've emphasized repeatedly what I expect out of this budget. I expect that there's serious efforts at health care reform and that we are driving down costs for families and businesses and, ultimately, for the Federal and State governments that are going to be broke if we continue on the current path. I've said that we've got to have a serious energy policy that frees ourselves from dependence on foreign oil and makes clean energy the profitable kind of energy. We've got to invest in education, K–12 and beyond, to upgrade the skills of the American worker so we can compete in the international economy. And I've said that we've got to start driving our deficit numbers down.

Now, we never expected when we printed out our budget that they would simply Xerox it and vote on it. We assume that it has to go through the legislative process. I have not yet seen the final product coming out of the Senate or the House, and we're in constant conversations with them. I am confident that the budget we put forward will have those principles in place.

When it comes to the middle class tax cut, we already had that in the recovery. We know that that's going to be in place for at least the next 2 years. We had identified a specific way to pay for it. If Congress has better ideas in terms of how to pay for it, then we're happy to listen.

When it comes to cap and trade, the broader principle is that we've got to move to a new energy era, and that means moving away from polluting energy sources towards cleaner energy sources. That is a potential engine for economic growth. I think cap and trade is the best way, from my perspective, to achieve some of those gains, because what it does is it starts pricing the pollution that's being sent into the atmosphere.

The way it's structured has to take into account regional differences; it has to protect consumers from huge spikes in electricity prices. So there are a lot of technical issues that are going to have to be sorted through. Our point in the budget is, let's get started now; we can't wait. And my expectation is that the energy committees or other relevant committees in both the House and the Senate are going to be moving forward a strong energy package. It'll be authorized, we'll get it done, and I will sign it.

Q. So is that a "yes," sir? You're willing to sign a budget that doesn't have those two provisions?

The President. No, I—what I said was I haven't seen yet what provisions are in there. The bottom line is, is that I want to see health care, energy, education, and serious efforts to reduce our deficit—our budget deficit. And there are going to be a lot of details that are

still being worked out, but I have confidence that we're going to be able to get a budget done that's reflective of what needs to happen in order to make sure that America grows.

Chip Reid [CBS News].

Federal Deficit/Balancing the Federal Budget

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. At both of your town hall meetings in California last week, you said, quote, "I didn't run for President to pass on our problems to the next generation." But under your budget the debt will increase $7 trillion over the next 10 years; the Congressional Budget Office says $9.3 trillion. And today on Capitol Hill some Republicans called your budget, with all the spending on health care, education, and environment, the most irresponsible budget in American history. Isn't that kind of debt exactly what you were talking about when you said "passing on our problems to the next generation"?

The President. First of all, I suspect that some of those Republican critics have a short memory, because as I recall I'm inheriting a $1.3 trillion deficit, annual deficit, from them. That would be point number one.

Point number two, both under our estimates and under the CBO estimates, both conservative—the most conservative estimates out there, we drive down the deficit over the first 5 years of our budget. The deficit is cut in half. And folks aren't disputing that.

Where the dispute comes in is what happens in a whole bunch of out-years. And the main difference between the budget that we presented and the budget that came out of Congressional Budget Office is assumptions about growth. They're assuming a growth rate of 2.2. We're assuming a growth rate of 2.6. Those small differences end up adding up to a lot of money. Our assumptions are perfectly consistent with what blue-chip forecasters out there are saying.

Now, none of us know exactly what's going to happen 6 or 8 or 10 years from now. Here's what I do know: If we don't tackle energy, if we don't improve our education system, if we don't drive down the costs of health care, if we're not making serious investments in science and technology and our infrastructure, then we won't grow 2.6 percent, we won't grow 2.2 percent. We won't grow.

And so what we've said is let's make the investments that ensure that we meet our growth targets, that put us on a pathway to growth, as opposed to a situation in which we're not making those investments and we still have trillion-dollar deficits.

And there's an interesting reason why some of these critics haven't put out their own budget. I mean, we haven't seen an alternative budget out of them. And the reason is because they know that in fact the biggest driver of long-term deficits are the huge health care costs that we've got out here that we're going to have to tackle. And we—that if we don't deal with some of the structural problems in our deficit, ones that were here long before I got here, then we're going to continue to see some of the problems in those out-years.

And so, what we're trying to emphasize is, let's make sure that we're making the investments that we need to grow, to meet those growth targets. At the same time, we're still reducing the deficit by a couple of trillion dollars; we are cutting out wasteful spending in areas like Medicare; we're changing procurement practices when it comes to the Pentagon budget; we are looking at social service programs and education programs that don't work and eliminate them. And we will continue to go line by line through this budget, and where we find programs that don't work we will eliminate them.

But it is going to be a impossible task for us to balance our budget if we're not taking on rising health care costs. And it's going to be an impossible task to balance our budget or even approximate it, if we are not boosting our growth rates. And that's why our budget focuses on the investments we need to make that happen.

Federal Budget

Q. But even under your budget, as you said, over the next 4 or 5 years, you're going to cut the deficit in half. Then after that, 6 years in a row, it goes up, up, up. If you're making all these long-term structural cuts, why does it continue to go up in the out-years?

The President. Well, look, it is going to take a whole host of adjustments, and we couldn't reflect all of those adjustments in this budget. Let me give you an example. There's been a lot of talk about entitlements and Medicare and Medicaid. The biggest problem we have long term is Medicare and Medicaid, but whatever reforms we initiative on that front—and we're very serious about working on a bipartisan basis to reduce those deficits or reduce those costs—you're not going to see those savings reflected until much later.

And so a budget is a snapshot of what we can get done right now, understanding that 8, 10 years from now we will have had a whole series of new budgets, and we're going to have to make additional adjustments. And once we get out of this current economic crisis, then it's going to be absolutely important for us to take another look and say, "Are we growing as fast as we need to grow? Are there further cuts that we need to make? What other adjustments are—is it going to take for us to have a sustainable budget level?"

But keep in mind, just to give one other example, as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product, we are reducing nondefense discretionary spending to its lowest level since the sixties, lower than it was under Reagan, lower than it was under Clinton, lower than it was under Bush—or both Bushes. And so if we're growing, if we are doing what's necessary to create new businesses and to expand the economy, and we are making sure that we're eliminating some of these programs that aren't working, then over time that gap can close.

But I'm—look, I'm not going to lie to you, it is tough. As I said, that's why the critics tend to criticize, but they don't offer an alternative budget. Because even if we were not doing health care, we were not doing energy, we were not doing education, they'd still have a whole bunch of problems in those out-years, according to CBO projections. The only difference is that we will not have invested in what's necessary to make this economy grow.

Is Lourdes [Lourdes Meluza] here, from Univision?

Mexico-U.S. Border Security

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Today your administration presented a plan to help curb the violence in Mexico and also to control any, or prevent any, spillover of the violence into the United States. Do you consider the situation now a national security threat? And do you believe that it could require sending national troops to the border? Governor Perry of Texas has said that you still need more troops and more agents. How do you respond to that?

The President. Well, first of all, let's focus on what we did today. It's very significant. We are sending millions of dollars in additional equipment to provide more effective surveillance. We are providing hundreds of additional personnel that can help control the border, deal with customs issues. We are coordinating very effectively with the Mexican Government and President Calderon, who has taken on a extraordinarily difficult task of dealing with these drug cartels that have gotten completely out of hand.

And so the steps that we've taken are designed to make sure that the border communities in the United States are protected and you're not seeing a spillover of violence, and that we are helping the Mexican Government deal with a very challenging situation. Now, we are going to continue to monitor the situation. And if what—the steps we've taken do not get the job done, then we will do more.

One last point that I want to make about this. As I said, President Calderon has been very courageous in taking on these drug cartels. We've got to also take some steps. Even as he is doing more to deal with the drug cartels sending drugs into the United States, we need to do more to make sure that illegal guns and cash aren't flowing back to these cartels. That's part of what's financing their operations, that's part of what's arming them, that's what makes them so dangerous. And this is something that we take very seriously and we're going to continue to work on diligently in the months to come.

Kevin Baron, Stars and Stripes. Is Kevin here? There you go.

Veterans Administration/Defense Procurement Reform

Q. Mr. President, where do you plan to find savings in the Defense and Veterans Administrations budgets when so many items that seem destined for the chopping block are politically untenable perhaps?

The President. I'm sorry, so many?

Q. When so many items that may be destined for the chopping block seem politically untenable, from major weapons systems, as you mentioned, procurement, to wounded warrior care costs, or increased operations in Afghanistan, or the size of the military itself.

The President. Well, a couple of points I want to make. The budget that we've put forward reflects the largest increase in veterans funding in 30 years. That's the right thing to do.

Chuck asked earlier about sacrifices. I don't think anybody doubts the extraordinary sacrifices that men and women in uniform have already made. And when they come home, then they have earned the benefits that they receive, and, unfortunately, over the last several years, all too often the VA has been underresourced when it comes to dealing with things like Posttraumatic Stress Disorder or traumatic brain injury, dealing with some of the backlogs in admission to VA hospitals. So there are a whole host of veterans issues that I think every American wants to see properly funded, and that's what's reflected in our budget.

Where the savings should come in—and I've been working with Secretary Gates on this and will be detailing it more in the weeks to come—is how do we reform our procurement system so that it keeps America safe and we're not wasting taxpayer dollars. And there is uniform acknowledgement that the procurement system right now doesn't work. That's not just my opinion, that's John McCain's opinion; that's Carl Levin's opinion. There are a whole host of people who are students of the procurement process that will say, if you've got a whole range of billion-dollar—multibillion-dollar systems that are—where we're seeing cost overruns at 30 percent or 40 percent or 50 percent, and then still don't perform the way they're supposed to or aren't providing our troops with the kinds of tools that they need to succeed on their missions, then we've got a problem.

Now, I think everybody in this town knows that the politics of changing procurement is tough because lobbyists are very active in this area; contractors are very good at dispersing the jobs and plants in the Defense Department widely. And so what we have to do is to go through this process very carefully, be more disciplined than we've been in the last several years. As I've said, we've already identified potentially $40 billion in savings just by some of the procurement reforms that are pretty apparent to a lot of critics out there. And we are going to continue to find savings in a way that allows us to put the resources where they're needed, but to make sure that we're not simply fattening defense contractors.

One last point: In order for us to get a handle on these costs, it's also important that we are honest in what these costs are. And that's why it was so important for us to acknowledge the true costs of the Iraq war and the Afghan war, because if those costs are somehow off the books and we're not thinking about them, then it's hard for us to make some of the tough choices that need to be made.

Ed Henry [Cable News Network]. Where's Ed? There he is.

Federal Deficit/Federal Budget

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You spoke again at the top about your anger about AIG. You've been saying that for days now. But why is it that it seems Andrew Cuomo seems to be in New York getting more actual action on it? And when you and Secretary Geithner first learned about this 10 days, 2 weeks ago, you didn't go public immediately with that that outrage; you waited a few days, and then you went public after you realized Secretary Geithner really had no legal avenue to stop it.

And more broadly—I just want to follow up on Chip and Jake—you've been very critical of President Bush doubling the national debt. And to be fair, it's not just Republicans hitting you; Democrat Kent Conrad, as you know, said, "When I look at this budget, I see the debt doubling again." You keep saying that you've inherited a big fiscal mess. Do you worry, though,

that your daughters—not to mention the next President—will be inheriting an even bigger fiscal mess if the spending goes out of control?

The President. Of course I do, Ed, which is why we're doing everything we can to reduce that deficit. Look, if this were easy, then we would have already had it done, and the budget would have been voted on, and everybody could go home. This is hard. And the reason it's hard is because we've accumulated a structural deficit that's going to take a long time, and we're not going to be able to do it next year or the year after or 3 years from now. What we have to do is bend the curve on these deficit projections. And the best way for us to do that is to reduce health care costs. That's not just my opinion, that's the opinion of almost every single person who has looked at our long-term fiscal situation.

Now, how do we—how are we going to reduce health care costs, because the problem is not just in Government-run programs, the problem is in the private sector as well. It's experienced by families; it's experienced by businesses. And so what we've said is, look, let's invest in health information technologies; let's invest in preventive care; let's invest in mechanisms that look at who's doing a better job controlling costs while producing good quality outcomes in various States, and let's reimburse on the basis of improved quality, as opposed to simply how many procedures you're doing. Let's do a whole host of things, some of which cost money on the front end but offer the prospect of reducing costs on the back end.

Now, the alternative is to stand pat and to simply say, we are just going to not invest in health care; we're not going to take on energy; we'll wait until the next time that gas gets to $4 a gallon; we will not improve our schools, and we'll allow China or India or other countries to lap our young people in terms of their performance; we will settle on lower growth rates, and we will continue to contract, both as an economy and our ability to provide a better life for our kids.

That I don't think is the better option. Now, have—am I completely satisfied with all the work that needs to be done on deficits? No. That's why I convened a fiscal responsibility summit, started in this room, to start looking at entitlements and to start looking at the big drivers of costs over the long term. Not all of those are reflected in our budget, partly because the savings we anticipate would be coming in years outside of the 10-year budget cycle that we're talking about. Okay?

Bonuses for American International Group (AIG) Executives

Q. On AIG, why did you wait days to come out and express that outrage? It seems like the action is coming out of New York and the attorney general's office. It took you days to come public with Secretary Geithner and say, look, we're outraged. Why did it take so long?

The President. It took us a couple of days because I like to know what I'm talking about before I speak, you know? [*Laughter*]

Major [Major Garrett, FOX News].

Global Economy/Strength of the Dollar/U.S. Image Abroad

Q. Good evening, Mr. President. Thank you. Taking this economic debate a bit globally, senior Chinese officials have publically expressed an interest in international currency. This is described by Chinese specialists as a sign that they are less confident than they used to be in the value and the reliability of the U.S. dollar. European countries have resisted your calls to spend more on economic stimulus. I wonder, sir, as a candidate who ran concerned about the image of the United States globally, how comfortable you are with the Chinese Government, run by Communists, less confident than they used to be in the U.S. dollar, and European governments, some of them center-left, some of them socialist, who say you're asking them to spend too much.

The President. Well, first of all, I haven't asked them to do anything. What I've suggested is, is that all of us are going to have to take steps in order to lift the economy. We don't want a situation in which some countries are making extraordinary efforts, and other countries aren't, with the hope that somehow the countries that are making those important

steps lift everybody up. And so somebody has got to take leadership.

It's not just me, by the way. I was with Kevin Rudd, the Prime Minister of Australia, today, who was very forceful in suggesting that countries around the world, those with the capacity to do so, take the steps that are needed to fill this enormous hole in global demand. Gordon Brown, when he came to visit me, said the exact same thing.

So the goal at the G–20 summit, I think, is to do a couple of things: Number one, say to all countries, let's do what's necessary in order to create jobs and to get the economy moving again. Let's avoid steps that could result in protectionism, that would further contract global trade. Let's focus on how are we going to move our regulatory process forward in order that we do not see the kinds of systemic breakdowns that we've already seen. And that requires—that means not just dealing with banks, but also some of the other financial flows that are out here that are currently unregulated. We've got to update regulations that date back to the 1930s, and we're going to have to do some coordination with other countries in order to accomplish that.

As far as confidence in the U.S. economy or the dollar, I would just point out that the dollar is extraordinarily strong right now. And the reason the dollar is strong right now is because investors consider the United States the strongest economy in the world, with the most stable political system in the world. So you don't have to take my word for it. I think that there is a great deal of confidence that, ultimately, although we are going through a rough patch, that the prospects for the world economy are very, very strong.

And last point I would make in terms of changing America's image in the world, Garrett, I've—you know, I haven't looked at the latest polling around the world, but I think it's fair to say that the response that people have had to our administration and the steps that we've taken are ones that are restoring a sense of confidence and the ability of the United States to assert global leadership. That will just strengthen.

Need for Global Currency

Q. And the need for a global——

The President. Excuse me?

Q. ——the need for a global currency?

The President. I don't believe that there's a need for a global currency.

Mike Allen, Politico. Hi, Mike.

Tax Code Reforms

Q. Mr. President, are you reconsidering—thank you, Mr. President. Are you reconsidering your plan to cut the interest rate deduction for mortgages and for charities? And do you regret having proposed that in the first place?

The President. No, I think it's the right thing to do, where we've got to make some difficult choices. Here's what we did with respect to tax policy. What we said was that over the last decade, the average worker, the average family have seen their wages and incomes flat. Even at times where supposedly we were in the middle of an economic boom, as a practical matter, their incomes didn't go up. And so what we said, let's give them a tax cut, let's give them some relief, some help, 95 percent of American families.

Now, for the top 5 percent, they're the ones who typically saw huge gains in their income. I fall in that category. And what we've said is for those folks, let's not renew the Bush tax cuts, so let's go back to the rates that existed back in—during the Clinton era when wealthy people were still wealthy and doing just fine; and let's look at the level in which people can itemize their deductions. And what we've said is let's go back to the rate that existed under Ronald Reagan.

People are still going to be able to make charitable contributions. It just means, if you give $100 and you're in this tax bracket, at a certain point, instead of being able write off 36 or 39 percent, you're writing off 28 percent. Now, if it's really a charitable contribution, I'm assuming that that shouldn't be a determining factor as to whether you're given that $100 to the homeless shelter down the street.

And so this provision would affect about 1 percent of the American people. They would

still get deductions. It's just that they wouldn't be able to write off 39 percent. In that sense, what it would do is it would equalize—when I give $100, I'd get the same amount of deduction as when some—a bus driver, who's making $50,000 a year or $40,000 a year, gives that same $100. Right now he gets 28 percent—he gets to write off 28 percent; I get to write off 39 percent. I don't think that's fair.

So I think this was a good idea. I think it is a realistic way for us to raise some revenue from people who benefited enormously over the last several years. It's not going to cripple them; they'll still be well-to-do. And ultimately, if we're going to tackle the serious problems that we've got, then in some cases those who are more fortunate are going to have to pay a little bit more.

Charitable Giving

Q. But it's not the well-to-do people, it's the charities. Given what you just said, are you confident the charities are wrong when they contend that this would discourage giving?

The President. Yes, I am. I mean, if you look at the evidence, there's very little evidence that this has a significant impact on charitable giving. I'll tell you what has a significant impact on charitable giving, is a financial crisis in an economy that's contracting. And so the most important thing that I can do for charitable giving is to fix the economy, to get banks lending again, to get businesses opening their doors again, and to get people back to work again. Then I think charities will do just fine.

Kevin Chappell [Ebony]. Hi, Kevin.

Homelessness in America

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. A recent report found that as a result of the economic downturn, 1 in 50 children are now homeless in America. With shelters at full capacity, tent cities are sprouting up across the country. In passing your stimulus package, you said that help was on the way. But what would you say to these families, especially children, who are sleeping under bridges in tents across the country?

The President. Well, the first thing I'd say is that I'm heartbroken that any child in America is homeless. And the most important thing that I can do on their behalf is to make sure their parents have a job.

And that's why the recovery package said as a first priority, how are we going to save or create 3.5 million jobs? How can we prevent layoffs for teachers and police officers? How can we make sure that we are investing in the infrastructure for the future that can put people back to work right away? How do we make sure that when people do lose their jobs that their unemployment insurance is extended, that they can keep their health care? So there are a whole host of steps that we've done to provide a cushion for folks who have fallen on very hard times and to try to spur immediate projects that can put people back to work.

Now, in the meantime, we've got to work very closely with the States to monitor and to help people who are still falling through the cracks. And the homeless problem was bad even when the economy was good. Part of the change in attitudes that I want to see here in Washington and all across the country is a belief that it is not acceptable for children and families to be without a roof over their heads in a country as wealthy as ours. And so we're going to be initiating a range of programs, as well, to deal with homelessness.

One area in particular I want to focus on is the issue of veterans. The rate of homelessness among veterans is much, much higher than for nonveteran populations. And so we've got—a number of the increases that we're looking for in our budget on veterans funding directly addresses the issue of homeless veterans. That, I think, can provide some real help.

Ann Compton [ABC Radio]. Hey, Ann.

Race in America

Q. Sir—hey. [*Laughter*]

The President. You sound surprised. [*Laughter*]

Q. I am surprised. Could I ask you about race?

The President. You may.

Q. Yours is a rather historic Presidency. And I'm just wondering whether in any of the

policy debates that you've had within the White House the issue of race has come up, or whether it has in the way you feel you've been perceived by other leaders or by the American people. Or has the last 64 days been a relatively colorblind time?

The President. I think that the last 64 days has been dominated by me trying to figure out how we're going to fix the economy. And that's—affects black, brown, and white. And, you know, obviously, at the Inauguration I think that there was justifiable pride on the part of the country that we had taken a step to move us beyond some of the searing legacies of racial discrimination in this country. But that lasted about a day—[*laughter*]—and, you know, right now the American people are judging me exactly the way I should be judged, and that is, are we taking the steps to improve liquidity in the financial markets, create jobs, get businesses to reopen, keep America safe. And that's what I've been spending my time thinking about.

Jon Ward, Washington Times. Where's Jon?

Federal Funds for Stem Cell Research

Q. Right here, sir.

The President. There you go.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Sure.

Q. In your remarks on stem cell research earlier this month, you talked about a majority consensus in determining whether or not this is the right thing to do, to federally fund embryonic stem cell research. I'm just wondering, though, how much you, personally, wrestled with the morality or ethics of federally funding this kind of research, especially given the fact that science so far has shown a lot of progress with adult stem cells, but not a lot with embryonic.

The President. Okay. I think it's a legitimate question. I wrestle with these issues every day, as I mentioned to—I think in an interview a couple of days ago. By the time an issue reaches my desk, it's a hard issue. If it was an easy issue, somebody else would have solved it, and it wouldn't have reached me.

Look, I believe that it is very important for us to have strong moral guidelines, ethical guidelines, when it comes to stem cell research or anything that touches on, you know, the issues of possible cloning or issues related to, you know, the human life sciences. I think those issues are all critical, and I've said so before. I wrestle with it on stem cell; I wrestle with it on issues like abortion.

I think that the guidelines that we provided meet that ethical test. What we have said is that for embryos that are typically about to be discarded, for us to be able to use those in order to find cures for Parkinson's or for Alzheimer's or, you know, all sorts of other debilitating diseases—juvenile diabetes—that it is the right thing to do. And that's not just my opinion, that is the opinion of a number of people who are also against abortion.

Now, I am glad to see progress is being made in adult stem cells. And if the science determines that we can completely avoid a set of ethical questions or political disputes, then that's great. I have no investment in causing controversy. I'm happy to avoid it, if that's where the science leads us. But what I don't want to do is predetermine this based on a very rigid, scientific—ideological approach, and that's what I think is reflected in the Executive order that I signed.

Ethics in Scientific Research

Q. I meant to ask a followup, though. Do you think that scientific consensus is enough to tell us what we can and cannot do?

The President. No. I think there's always an ethical and a moral element that has to be a part of this. And so, as I said, I don't take decisions like this lightly. They're ones that I take seriously. And I respect people who have different opinions on this issue. But I think that this was the right thing to do and the ethical thing to do. And as I said before, my hope is, is that we can find a mechanism, ultimately, to cure these diseases in a way that gains 100 percent consensus. And we certainly haven't achieved that yet, but I think on balance this was the right step to take.

Stephen Collinson, AFP [Agence France-Presse].

Middle East Peace Process/Domestic Agenda/ Iran

Q. Mr. President, you came into office pledging to work for peace between Israel and the Palestinians. How realistic do you think those hopes are now, given the likelihood of a Prime Minister who's not fully signed up to a two-state solution and a Foreign Minister who has been accused of insulting Arabs?

The President. It's not easier than it was, but I think it's just as necessary. We don't yet know what the Israeli Government is going to look like, and we don't yet know what the future shape of Palestinian leadership is going to be comprised of. What we do know is this: That the status quo is unsustainable; that it is critical for us to advance a two-state solution where Israelis and Palestinians can live side by side in their own states with peace and security.

And by assigning George Mitchell the task of working as Special Envoy, what we've signaled is that we're going to be serious from day one in trying to move the parties in a direction that acknowledges that reality. How effective these negotiations may be, I think we're going to have to wait and see. But, you know, we were here for St. Patrick's Day, and you'll recall that we had what had been previously sworn enemies celebrating here in this very room, you know, leaders from the two sides in Northern Ireland that, you know, a couple of decades ago or even a decade ago, people would have said could never achieve peace. And here they were, jointly appearing and talking about their commitment even in the face of violent provocation. And what that tells me is that if you stick to it, if you are persistent, then these problems can be dealt with.

That whole philosophy of persistence, by the way, is one that I'm going to be emphasizing again and again in the months and years to come, as long as I'm in this office. I'm a big believer in persistence. I think that when it comes to domestic affairs, if we keep on working at it, if we acknowledge that we make mistakes sometimes and that we don't always have the right answer and we're inheriting very knotty problems, that we can pass health care, we can find better solutions to our energy challenges, we can teach our children more effectively, we can deal with a very real budget crisis that is not fully dealt with in my budget at this point but makes progress.

I think when it comes to the banking system, you know, it was just a few days ago or weeks ago where people were certain that Secretary Geithner couldn't deliver a plan. Today the headlines all look like, well, all right, there's a plan. And I'm sure there will be more criticism, and we'll have to make more adjustments, but we're moving in the right direction.

When it comes to Iran, you know, we did a video sending a message to the Iranian people and the leadership of the Islamic Republic of Iran. And some people said, "Well, they did not immediately say that we're eliminating nuclear weapons and stop funding terrorism." Well, we didn't expect that. We expect that we're going to make steady progress on this front. We haven't immediately eliminated the influence of lobbyists in Washington. We have not immediately eliminated wasteful pork projects. And we're not immediately going to get Middle East peace. We've been in office now a little over 60 days.

What I am confident about is that we're moving in the right direction and that the decisions we're making are based on how are we going to get this economy moving, how are we going to put Americans back to work, how are we going to make sure that our people are safe, and how are we going to create not just prosperity here but work with other countries for global peace and prosperity. And we are going to stay with it as long as I'm in this office, and I think that you look back 4 years from now, I think, hopefully, people will judge that body of work and say, this is a big ocean liner—it's not a speedboat, it doesn't turn around immediately—but we're in a better place because of the decisions that we make.

All right. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 8:01 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Paul Holland, vice chairman of the board, Serious Material, Inc.; Secretary of the Treasury

Timothy F. Geithner; Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom; and U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George J. Mitchell. Some reporters referred to State Attorney General Andrew M. Cuomo of New York; and Prime Minister-designate Benjamin Netanyahu and Foreign Minister-designate Avigdor Lieberman of Israel.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Secretary General Jakob Gijsbert "Jaap" de Hoop Scheffer of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization
March 25, 2009

President Obama. Hello, everybody.

Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer. Hello, good morning.

President Obama. Hey, how are you doing? Well, everybody set up? I want to welcome the Secretary General. We just had an outstanding meeting. He has been a strong leader of NATO and we are very grateful for the service that he's provided. He's a great friend to the United States.

You know, we are about to celebrate the 60th anniversary of NATO at a summit in both France and Germany. It is a testimony to the strength of the transatlantic alliance, a testimony to the effectiveness of NATO in creating stability and peace and prosperity, laying the groundwork for so much that has taken place over the last several years.

We have a set of challenges that require NATO to shift from the 20th century to the 21st century—issues of terrorism, failed states, nuclear proliferation—a whole host of new challenges, as well as the traditional role that NATO has played in preserving the territorial integrity of NATO members.

And at this summit—the Secretary General and I have been discussing the agenda for the summit. We are confident that we can create a process whereby NATO, which is already strong, becomes stronger, where we become even more effective in coordinating our efforts in Afghanistan. As many of you know, we're in the process, this administration, of going through an evaluation, a strategic review of our approach to Afghanistan. And we expect to share that with our NATO counterparts. We've been in close consultation with them, and we believe that we are going to be able to ensure that the NATO members who have made so many sacrifices and have been working so hard already are reinvigorated and that the coordination that's going to be taking place will make it even more effective for us as we complete a successful NATO mission.

We've also discussed the role that NATO plays with respect to Russia and how this administration, my administration, is seeking a reset of the relationship with Russia, but in a way that's consistent with NATO membership and consistent with the need to send a clear signal throughout Europe that we are going to continue to abide by the central belief that countries who seek and aspire to join NATO are able to join NATO.

And finally, I thanked the Secretary General for his outstanding service. He is coming to the end of his tenure. I told him that he's a young man, so he's going to have to find something else to do, because he's an extraordinary talent. But he still has a lot of work in NATO to do just to get us through what is going to be a historic summit. And so I'm very grateful to him for taking the time to travel here.

Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer. Many thanks, Mr. President. For me, of course, it was a pleasure to meet the President of the United States, President Obama, for the first time here in the Oval Office in the run up, indeed, to the NATO summit in the beginning of April, so less than 2 weeks away in Strasbourg and Kehl, in France and Germany, in the heart of Europe, by the way, which is an interesting place to celebrate NATO's 60th anniversary.

But as the President already said, celebrating your 60th anniversary should not only be back to look at your successes, but also look ahead. And in Afghanistan, there are still major challenges. Many things are going right, but many things are not going right. We are, of course, waiting the results of the review going on in the

United States of America, very relevant for the other allies, very relevant for NATO, and that review will certainly be discussed at the summit, Afghanistan being NATO's most important operational priority.

NATO's future will be discussed as well. The question: Is NATO going to have a new strategic concept, which brings to the surface a number of questions President Obama already spoke about—NATO's expeditionary capabilities, never forgetting NATO's core function, the integrity of the NATO territory, NATO's relations with Russia. We have many things on which we disagree, but NATO needs Russia and Russia needs NATO, so let's work on the things we agree on, and let's not hide our disagreements and let us realize that also this relationship can and in my opinion should be strengthened.

So it's a full plate at the summit, from Afghanistan to NATO-Russia to NATO's future. We'll greet, hopefully, two new members—NATO's door is open—Albania and Croatia in the family of democratic nations. And as President Obama said a moment ago, NATO's door will stay open for new members if they perform—if they fulfill the criteria.

And I'm quite sure that President Obama's administration, as we discussed in the past 45 minutes, is and will be a staunch supporter of the North Atlantic Alliance, because it was and is and will stay, Mr. President, a unique alliance, bringing the United States of America, Canada, and the European allies together. So it was a privilege to talk to the President. Thank you very much indeed, sir.

President Obama. Thank you.

Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer. Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you very much. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:33 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks at a Celebration of Greek Independence Day
March 25, 2009

President Obama. Thank you. Well, what a great honor. I will tell Michelle that I've been compared to Alexander the Great. [*Laughter*] I will see whether that gets me a little more respect—[*laughter*]—at home. She knows she's still the boss.

Your Eminence, it is a great honor to have you here. And I want to mention a few others who are here that deserve acknowledgment. Father Alex Karloutsos—Father Alex, where did you go? There he is. The Greek Minister of Justice is here. Where—there he is. Dendias—did I say that properly? We also have the Greek Ambassador Mallias, and we have the Cypriot Ambassador Kakouris.

Thank you all. And I see a lot of good friends, a few from Chicago; we've got the Chicago contingent in the house. Wonderful supporters, great friends of mine, welcome to the White House.

It is a great honor to be here with His Eminence as we mark the 10th anniversary since he became Archbishop. And it is a privilege to join all of you as we celebrate the contributions of Greece and those of Greek heritage to this country and to the world.

Today we commemorate the 188th anniversary of Greek independence, and we reaffirm a bond between our two nations born through struggle but also through shared ideals. It is a bond that's on display today in towns and cities across the United States. In Chicago, we have a thriving Greek American community centered around a neighborhood known as Greektown. There's a parade marking independence each year. In fact, at this very moment, you might find young people in Chicago's streets paying tribute to their Greek heritage by wearing the traditional foustanellas. [*Laughter*] I notice some of you aren't dressed appropriately. [*Laughter*] I haven't seen any around the White House today, but I'm keeping an eye out.

Audience member. Maybe next year.

President Obama. Next year? Alexi, where's yours? [*Laughter*] Because, as you know, there are many proud Greek Americans in my administration.

And this bond we share dates to our founding. America's revolutionaries imagined a new system of government, but they drew upon an ancient precedent. It's no coincidence that the leaders of the American Revolution, Jefferson and Madison, Adams, Hamilton, were students of Greek history and Greek philosophy. As a boy, Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence, was said to prefer spending time with his Greek grammar books than with his classmates.

In our darkest days, when our Revolution was a fading hope, when friends were few and victories were rare, these leaders found allies in ancient texts. And just as America's Founders sought guidance and inspiration from Greece, Greek revolutionaries drew strength and support from the United States, as was just mentioned by His Eminence. In fact, these leaders appealed directly to the American people, offering respect and seeking support. They wrote, "it is your land"—"it is in your land that liberty has fixed her abode. In imitating you, we shall imitate our ancestors and be thought worthy of them if we succeed in resembling you."

In a message to Congress soon after the inception of fighting, President Monroe affirmed our kinship with the Greeks who were, and I quote, "contending in favor of their liberties." He spoke of a "strong hope . . . that these people will recover their independence and resume their equal station among the nations of the Earth."

Of course, it's been a difficult and long-enduring struggle, both in the many centuries before the call for independence and in the nearly two centuries since. It's perhaps the cruelest of ironies that a people who first tested a free and democratic form of government were doomed to live so long without it.

But it's also one of history's great triumphs that even in the darkest periods, the light of those ideals were never extinguished: Through brutal wars, instead, people who were inspired by the ideals met them with bravery; through occupations that were met with defiance; through hardship met with incredible character—and character of a people that never lost hope in the values Greece has always represented.

Today, Greece stands as a testament of that unflinching character, as does the steadfast allegiance between our two nations. And I am proud to welcome so many Greek citizens and Greek Americans to the White House as we celebrate this occasion and our continued partnership in the years ahead.

So thank you, Your Eminence. Thanks, all of you, for taking the time to be here. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:13 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Archbishop Demetrios, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church of America; Reverend Father Alex Karloutsos, assistant to the Archbishop for public affairs; Greece's Ambassador to the U.S. Alexandros P. Mallias; and Cyprus's Ambassador to the U.S. Andreas S. Kakouris. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden and Archbishop Demetrios.

Statement on the Death of John Hope Franklin
March 25, 2009

Because of the life John Hope Franklin lived, the public service he rendered, and the scholarship that was the mark of his distinguished career, we all have a richer understanding of who we are as Americans and our journey as a people.

Dr. Franklin will be deeply missed, but his legacy is one that will surely endure. Michelle and I send our thoughts and prayers to his loved ones, as our Nation mourns his loss.

Statement on National Medal of Honor Day
March 25, 2009

We are grateful to all those who wear the uniform of our Armed Forces and serve and sacrifice on behalf of our great Nation. Members of our Armed Forces hold themselves to the highest standards and set an example of responsibility to one another and to the country that should inspire all Americans to serve a purpose greater than themselves. Today we pay our respect to those who distinguished themselves conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty, the recipients of the Medal of Honor.

Since it was first awarded during the Civil War to the current battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan, Medal of Honor recipients have displayed tremendous courage, an unfailing determination to succeed, and a humbling willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice. It is telling that so many Medal of Honor recipients received the award posthumously. These soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coast guardsman embody the best of American values and ideals.

Medal of Honor recipients are the foremost example of greatness in service and sacrifice. Their bravery and humble strength continues to reassure our Nation of the strength of its character and ideals even in these difficult times. We owe these heroes a debt of gratitude that our Nation can never fully repay. So it is on this day that we salute that fact and celebrate their lives and heroic actions that have placed them amongst the bravest of the brave. We must never forget their sacrifice and will always keep the fallen and their families in our thoughts and prayers.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser
March 25, 2009

Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Please, everybody, have a seat. Thank you. Thank you so much. Now, first of all, I want to thank all the attendees, and Jane Stetson, the DNC national finance chair, and Andy Tobias, who is the DNC treasurer. Both of them have done so much already for the party. We're grateful for them.

I want to thank my great friend Tim Kaine. He's being a little modest when he says he endorsed me early. He endorsed me before just about anybody else outside of Illinois endorsed me, on the steps in Richmond, the former seat of the Confederacy, back in February of 2007, at a time when not many people gave me a chance. And, Tim, we are just extraordinarily grateful for you, for the exceptional leadership that you're already showing not just in Virginia, but now as a strong and steady hand at the DNC.

And one of the things I'm most excited about with Tim is that he understands this is not about top-down politics, this is about bottom-up politics. And part of the reason I was so excited to have him be part of the DNC is he understood that what matters ultimately is how well we are mobilizing the American people to take charge of this democracy. And that's what he's stood for all his life; that's what he's standing for now.

I want to thank all the members of the national finance committee and the mid-Atlantic finance committee in this room who have been there every step of the way for more than 2 years now. Without you, I would not be standing here today as President. And so I'm extraordinarily grateful.

And I'm grateful to all of you at the Democratic National Committee and Organizing for America—OFA—for your efforts to share our

future-facing agenda with the American people. I know that thousands of volunteers, as Tim talked about, took the extraordinary step last weekend of reaching out to Americans all across 50 States, talking to people about our plans to move this economy from recession to recovery and ultimately to prosperity. And I'm always humbled by their efforts, because they're doing it not because they want something out of it; they're not doing it because they think that they're going to benefit in some personal way. They're doing it because they believe in this country and are willing to commit to it.

It's those efforts that help me hear the concerns of ordinary Americans from all across this country—their struggles and their hopes; their worries about whether they'll have a job and a paycheck that they can count on; whether they'll be able to pay their medical bills or their child's college tuition; or whether they're going to be able to retire anytime soon.

These are the concerns I heard last week when I traveled to California and I spent time talking with ordinary Americans in town halls and in the places where they work. They're the same concerns that I read about when I look through the letters that I've taken to reading every night, letters from constituents all across the country. And all of them ask the same simple question: What are you going to do in Washington about the problems that we're facing out here? Do you hear me? Do you remember me?

Over the past 2 months, we've been working to answer that question with a comprehensive strategy to attack the current economic crisis on all fronts. And I know it can be easy, especially in Washington, to get caught up in the day-to-day chatter of cable television; to be distracted by the petty and the trivial, and to fall into the trap of keeping score about who's up and who's down.

There will be days where we may be declared winners, and there will be days where the umpires say, "Oh, they lost that one." There will be days when the markets go up; there will be days when the markets go down. But you and I, we measure our economic recovery in a different way. We're already starting to see signs of progress that we're making a difference in the lives of the American people.

We measure our recovery by how many Americans can bring home a paycheck that lets them make ends meet. That's why the first part of our strategy was to pass the recovery plan to jump-start job creation and put money in people's pockets. And because we did, all across the country there are teachers that are still in the classroom, and police officers that are still on the beat, and construction crews that are breaking ground rebuilding America's infrastructure for the future. Because of this plan, as early as next week, 95 percent of all Americans are going to receive a tax cut that we promised during the campaign. It's going to be in their paychecks.

That's how we measure success. We measure our recovery by how many families own their own piece of the American Dream. That's why the second step of our strategy was to launch a plan to stabilizing the housing market and help responsible homeowners stay in their homes. That's why the recovery plan included an $8,000 tax credit for first-time homebuyers. Already, mortgage rates have fallen to near-historic lows, encouraging Americans to refinance their mortgages, and we've begun to see signs of increased sales and stabilizing home prices for the very first time in a long time.

We measure our recovery by how many small businesses can keep their doors open, and how many families can afford the promise of a college education. And that's why the third step that we took was to restart the flow of credit to families and businesses by generating car loans and student loans and small-business loans. It's a program that Secretary Geithner worked with the Federal Reserve to design, and it has already generated more lending in the last week than we saw in the previous 4 months combined.

And ultimately, we're going to measure our success based on whether we can create an economy that builds a lasting foundation for our shared economic growth so that we don't face another crisis like this 10 years from now or 20 years from now.

You see, what's happened over the last 6 months is the result of an economy built on years of reckless speculation and overinflated housing prices and maxed-out credit cards and

overleveraged banks. And that approach doesn't create lasting wealth; it creates the illusion of prosperity, and it's endangered us all.

And that's why the most critical part of our strategy is to build our economy on a stronger foundation, and that's what the budget I submitted to Congress is designed to do. It's more than just a budget; it's a blueprint for our economic future. It's a vision of what the Democratic Party stands for, that boldly and wisely makes the choices we as a nation have been putting off for too long.

Because we know that we've got to reduce our dependence on foreign oil, we're going to invest heavily in renewable sources of energy that will lead to new jobs and new industries and put America at the forefront of a clean energy future.

Because we know that countries that outeducate us today will outcompete us tomorrow, we're going to invest in childhood education, in high standards and accountability for our schools. We're going to reward teachers for success, and we're going to invest in affordable college educations for anybody who wants to go. It's time to demand excellence from our schools so we can finally prepare our workforce for a 21st century economy and inspire our children to come out of school saying they want to be scientists and engineers and doctors and teachers.

And because we know that the crushing cost of health care is punishing families and businesses, and bankrupting the Federal and State governments, we're going to invest in reforms that bring down those costs while improving care and guaranteeing Americans their choice of doctors and hospitals. The choice isn't between health care reform and fiscal discipline; we have to invest in health reform in order to achieve fiscal discipline.

And because we've inherited a historic fiscal mess, this budget makes the tough choices necessary to cut our deficit in half by the end of my first term, even under the most pessimistic estimates. We've proposed $2 trillion in deficit reductions over the next decade. We'll continue making these tough choices in the months and years ahead as our economy recovers.

In the end, the best way to bring down this deficit is to grow our economy. It's not with a budget that continues the very same policies that have led us down the path of narrow prosperity for a few and massive debt. It's with a budget that leads to broad economic growth and shared prosperity, moving from an era of borrow and spend to saving and investing.

That's what clean energy jobs and businesses will do. That's what a highly skilled workforce will do. That's what an efficient health care system can do. That's how we're going to control costs of entitlements like Medicare and Medicaid. That's why this budget is inseparable from this recovery, because it is what lays the foundation for a secure and lasting prosperity, the groundwork for a future that reflects what we know this country can be.

Now, there are those who will tell you that all this is too much, that the plans in this budget are just too ambitious to enact; we should only focus, they'll tell you, on one problem at a time. But we know that the challenges we face are too large to ignore. The cost of our health care is too high to ignore. Our dependence on foreign oil is too dangerous to ignore. Our education deficit is growing too wide to ignore.

I said this at a town hall meeting the other day: The American people don't have the luxury of choosing to handle one problem at a time. They can't say, "Well, you know what, I'm not going to pay my mortgage this month because I've got medical bills to pay; we're not going to save for our retirement, we're going to do a child's college tuition." They've got to do it all at the same time. They've got to confront all of these problems. That's why we have to confront all of these problems.

To kick these problems down the road 4 years from now, 8 years from now, for the next President, for the next generation, that would be to duplicate the irresponsibility that led us to this point. That's not why I ran for office. That's not why you worked so hard during this election. You didn't send me here to pass on problems to somebody else. You sent me here to solve them, and with your help, that's what I intend to do.

So we know that the road to our future is going to be long; we're going to hit our share

of bumps and setbacks before it ends. We know that there's going to be a lot of sniping. We know that that's how this town works. [*Laughter*] But we also know this: We'll only get there if we travel down this road as one nation, as one people. We'll only get there if we remember that what has always built America is unflinching faith in the future and unshakable confidence that new and better day lies ahead.

If we take the smart steps right now to create lasting economic growth, if we look beyond our own short-term self interests to the wider set of obligations that we have to each other, if we band together with resolve and clear purpose to take care of business right here and now, we succeed. That's when we prosper. That's when the United States of America cannot be stopped.

And seeing all of you here tonight, I believe that the future is going to be very bright for all of us. So I thank you. I hope you're ready to continue rolling up your sleeves. Our work is not yet done. It's not yet time to celebrate. But we're going to get it done, I'm absolutely confident, thanks to you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:58 p.m. at the National Women in the Arts Museum. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Timothy M. Kaine of Virginia, in his capacity as chairman of the Democratic National Committee; and Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser
March 25, 2009

The President. Hello! How's it going, Democrats? Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Please, have a seat. Thank you.

How about the Howard University Gospel Choir? Give it up, Howard—HU. How about Tony Bennett? And how about Tim Kaine? Tim endorsed me in February of 2007, when a whole bunch of people could not pronounce my name. [*Laughter*]

Audience members. Obama! Obama! Obama!

The President. Well, it's easy now. [*Laughter*]

Audience members. Obama! Obama! Obama!

The President. Thank you. Yes, well, at the time it was a little harder. [*Laughter*] And Tim has just been an extraordinary friend, but most importantly, we're grateful for his leadership in Virginia as Governor, his strong and steady tenure at the helm of the DNC. He is going to be one of the best chairmen we've ever had.

I want to thank the national finance committee, the mid-Atlantic finance committee, everybody in this room who has been there every step of the way for the last couple of years. All of you were just hanging tough through all the twists and turns of our campaign. And without you, I wouldn't be standing here today. So thank you very much.

To the Democratic National Committee, to Organizing for America, thank you for your efforts to share our future-facing agenda with the American people. And I know that there are thousands of volunteers all across this country who just this weekend took the extraordinary step of going door to door, talking to their friends, talking to their neighbors, sending a message about why we've got to move this economy forward from recession to recovery and ultimately to prosperity. And I am humbled by their efforts.

In these efforts, what they do is they help me connect with everyday Americans, their struggles, their hopes, their dreams, their worries about whether they're going to have a job and a paycheck to count on, whether they're going to be able to pay the medical bills, or keep up with their mortgage, or pay tuition for their children.

These are the same concerns that I heard when I traveled to California last week. Every once in a while we like to get out of this town. [*Laughter*] Not because I don't enjoy Washington, but because it is important to get out of the hall of mirrors here and listen to what's happening with the American people. The same concerns that I read about—I've taken the habit of reading a sampling of letters that are sent to the

White House every single night, just to remind myself of why we worked so hard and why we are here. All of these letters, all of these comments and questions I get at town halls, they ask the same question: What are you going to do in Washington to not give us a hand out, but give us a hand up; to help us figure out how we can manage through these difficult times? We are willing to work hard. We are willing to take our responsibilities seriously. We just want to make sure that our families have their chance at the American Dream.

Now, over the past 2 months, we've been working to answer that question with a comprehensive strategy to attack the crisis on all fronts. And I know that in Washington sometimes it's easy to get caught up in the day-to-day cable chatter and be distracted by the petty and the trivial, and everybody is keeping score—are they up, are they down? You know, one day I'm a genius; one day I'm a bum. [*Laughter*] You know, every day there's a new winner and a new loser.

So what we understand is there are going to be days where things don't go exactly the way we planned, and days where things go smoothly. There are going to be days where the market goes up, and days where the market goes down. But that's not how we measure success. We measure economic recovery in a different way. And we're seeing progress all across America, because we measure recovery by how many Americans can bring home a paycheck that helps them make ends meet.

And that's why the first part of our strategy was to pass a recovery plan that would jumpstart the economy, put money in people's pockets. And because we did, all across America you've got teachers who are still teaching and police officers who are still on the beat; you've got construction workers that are breaking ground on the infrastructure that will guide us to the future. Because of that plan, 95 percent of working families are going to have a tax cut in their paycheck in a few weeks.

That's how we measure recovery. We measure recovery whether—by whether families can keep their own piece of the American Dream. And that's why the second step was to put forward a bold housing plan to stabilize the market, and we are now starting to see mortgage rates at their lowest levels. We're already starting to see, because of an $8,000 tax credit for first-time homebuyers, that now we're seeing glimmers of hope, and home prices are starting to stabilize in parts of the country. And we're seeing record refinancings.

That's because of this plan. That's how we measure success. We measure success by whether or not the American people have confidence that small businesses all across America are going to have the opportunity to keep their doors open. And that's why we passed a series of measures, working with Tim Geithner and the Federal Reserve Bank, to open up credit to small businesses, to make sure that we're providing loan guarantees beyond what we've traditionally provided.

And we measure success by whether or not kids can go to college, which is why we made sure that we are dealing with the loan market and student loans that had dried up, and now young people who have the grades and the will to go to college, they've got a chance to do that. We've already generated more lending in the last week than we had generated over the previous 4 months because of the actions that we have taken.

And ultimately, we are going to measure our success based on whether we're creating an economy that builds a lasting foundation for shared economic growth, so that we don't face another cycle of bubble and bust, and another crisis like this 10, 20 years from now.

That's what happened over the last 6 months, we've seen the consequence of years of an economy that was built on speculation and inflated home prices and maxed-out credit cards and overleveraged banks. It looked good at the time, but it didn't create lasting wealth; it created the illusion of prosperity. And now it's put us all at risk.

That's why the most critical part of our strategy is to build an economy on a strong foundation, and that's what the budget I submitted to Congress does. It's not just a budget; it's a blueprint for our economic future. It finally tackles those things that we have been putting off for far too long. Because we know that we've got to reduce our dependence on

foreign oil, and that why we're going to invest in renewable energies that lead to the jobs and industries of tomorrow.

We know that the countries that out-educate us are going to outcompete us tomorrow. And that's why we invested in early childhood education, and high standards for our schools, and rewards for teachers who are successful, and college educations for anybody who wants to go. We've got to demand excellence for our schools, to finally prepare our workforce for the 21st century economy. We want our children to be scientists and engineers and doctors and teachers.

And because we know that the crushing cost of health care is bankrupting families and businesses, and bankrupting the Federal Government and the State government, our budget reflects the reforms that will bring down costs, and improve care, and guarantee Americans their choice of doctors and hospitals.

People talk about, "Well, you can't do health care right now; we need more fiscal discipline." They don't understand the choice isn't between health care reform and fiscal discipline; we have to invest in health care reform in order to deliver fiscal discipline. That's exactly—one of the reasons we're doing this.

And because we've inherited an economic mess and a fiscal mess, this budget makes the tough choices necessary to cut the deficit by the end of my first term in half, even under the most pessimistic estimates. We've already proposed $2 trillion in deficit reduction over the next decade. We'll continue making these tough choices in the months and years ahead as our economy recovers.

And to a bunch of the critics out there, I've already said, show me your budget. Show me what you want to do. And I'm happy to have that debate, because I believe in the vision of the Democratic Party. I believe in a vision that helps people help themselves. And I believe that in the end, the best way to bring down our deficit is not with a budget that continues the very same policies that led to the false prosperity and massive debts that we've seen. It's a budget that leads to broad economic growth, moves us from an era of borrow and spend to save and invest.

That's what clean energy jobs will do. That's what a highly skilled workforce will do. That's what an efficient health care system that controls costs will do. That's why this budget is inseparable from recovery, because it lays the foundation for a secure and lasting prosperity, the groundwork for a future that reflects what we know this country can be.

Now, let me just say that there are those who say, "You know, you're taking on too much;" says the budget is too ambitious, we should only focus on one problem at a time.

Audience members. No!

The President. But we know—we're smarter than that. Because, we know the challenges are too big to ignore. That single mom out there trying to figure out whether she can have health care for her family, she doesn't think——

Audience member. She can't wait.

The President. She cannot wait. I'm not going to wait until we've got another $4-a-gallon gasoline before suddenly everybody says, "Why don't we have an energy policy?" We can't wait. I'm not going to wait until suddenly we find out that our children can't compete for the jobs of the future. That's why we're going to fix education now not later. We can't wait.

The American people don't have the luxury of focusing on one problem at a time. They can't tell their landlord, "Sir, I can't pay the rent this month, I got other things to do." [*Laughter*] They don't say, "I'm sorry, we're not going to get sick this month because we've got other things to spend our money on." They have to choose between—they shouldn't have to choose between tuition for their kids and retirement. They've got all these challenges all at once. They have to do all of these things. And that's why we have to do all of these things, because I'm not going to turn my back on the American people who sent me here.

And I'm not going to kick these problems down the road for another 4 years, another 8 years, to the next President, the next generation. We're going to tackle them now. That's why I ran for President. That's why you helped me become President. That's why we are not going to stop until we get this thing done.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:05 p.m. at the Warner Theater. In his remarks, he referred to singer Tony Bennett; Gov. Timothy M. Kaine of Virginia, in his capacity as chairman of the Democratic National Committee; and Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Virtual Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session
March 26, 2009

The President. Thank you so much. Well, it is great to see all of you. And I am thrilled that all of you here in the White House and everybody who is viewing this online is participating in this experiment that we're trying out. When I was running for President, I promised to open up the White House to the American people. And this event, which is being streamed live over the Internet, marks an important step towards achieving that goal. And I'm looking forward to taking your questions and hearing your thoughts and concerns, because what matters to you and your families and what people here in Washington are focused on aren't always one and the same thing.

Here in Washington, politics all too often is treated like a game. There's a lot of point scoring, a lot of talk about who's up and who's down, a lot of time and energy spent on whether the President is winning or losing on this particular day or at this particular hour. But this isn't about me. It's about you. It's about the folks whose letters I read every single day. And for the American people, what's going on is not a game. What matters to you is how you're going to find a new job when nobody seems to be hiring or how to pay medical bills after you get out of the hospital or how to put your children through college when the money you'd put away for their tuition is no longer there.

That's what matters to you. That's what you expect your leaders to be focused on. And that's why I've been working to deliver the changes you sent me here to make, to ensure that we're not only making it through this crisis, but come out on the other side stronger and more prosperous as a nation over the long term. That's the future that I believe is within our reach.

But that future will not come about on its own. It will come because we all, every single one of us, from Main Street to the Halls of Congress, do what generations of Americans have done in times of trial; because we remember that at heart we are one nation and one people, and united by a bond that no division of party or ideology can break; because we come together as Americans to choose that better day.

And that's what we've already begun to do. We as a nation have already begun the critical work that will lead to our economic recovery. It's a recovery that will be measured by whether jobs are being created and families have more money to pay their bills at the end of each month. That's why we're preventing teachers and police officers from being laid off and putting Americans to work rebuilding our crumbling roads and bridges and dams, creating or saving 3.5 million jobs in the coming years. And that's why we're putting a tax cut into the pockets of 95 percent of working families who will see it—see that tax cut in their paycheck by April 1st.

It's a recovery that will be measured by whether families can achieve that most American of dreams and own a home without fear of losing it. That's why we've launched a plan to stabilize the housing market and help responsible homeowners stay in their homes. This plan is one of the reasons that mortgage interest rates are now at near-historic lows. And we've already seen a jump in refinancings of mortgages and homeowners taking advantage of lower rates. And every American, by the way, should know that up to 40 percent of all

mortgages right now are eligible for refinancing.

It's a recovery that will be measured by whether families and entrepreneurs can get the loans they need. And that's why we're freeing up credit that's frozen with a program that supports the market for more car loans and student loans and small-business loans and with a plan that will partner government resources with private investment to break the logjam that is currently preventing our banks from lending money to even the most creditworthy customers.

And in the end, it's a recovery that will be measured by whether it lasts, whether it endures; by whether we build our economy on a solid foundation instead of a overheated housing market or maxed-out credit cards or the sleight of hand on Wall Street; whether we build an economy in which prosperity is broadly shared. That's what the budget I expect to sign is intended to do. It's a budget that cuts the things we don't need to make room for the investments we do, a budget that cuts the massive deficits we've inherited in half by the end of my first term and offers a blueprint for America's success in the 21st century.

That success will require preparing every child, everywhere in this country, to outcompete any worker anywhere in the world because we know that those students who are getting the best education are going to be able to compete. And that's why we're making a historic investment in early childhood education. And that's why we're going to make a historic investment in improving K–12 education, making sure that our children get a complete and competitive education from the cradle up through a career. It's an investment that will expand and improve not just early learning programs, but reward good teachers while replacing bad ones and put college or technical training within reach for anyone who wants it.

Our success will also require freeing ourselves from the dangerous dependence on foreign oil by building a clean energy economy, because we know that with this will not only come greater security and a safer environment, but new high-paying jobs of the future to replace those that we've lost.

And our success will also require controlling spiraling health care costs that are bankrupting families, and crushing businesses, and driving up skyrocketing deficits. At the current course and speed, these health care costs are unsustainable. And that's why my budget takes a first big step towards comprehensive health care reform that will reduce costs, improve care, and ensure that everyone who works has coverage they can afford.

This is what Americans' success demands and this is what our budget will do. And I'm under no illusions that a better day will come about quickly or easily. It's going to be hard. But as I said the other night at my press conference, I'm a big believer in the idea of persistence, the idea that when the American people put their mind to something and keep at it, without giving up, without turning back, no obstacle can stand in our way and no dream is beyond our reach. That's why we're here today, because it will take all of us talking with one another, all of us sharing ideas, all of us working together to see our country through this difficult time and bring about that better day.

So I want to thank all of you for this opportunity to talk with you. And now I'd like to bring Jared back up to the stage, and he's going to open it up for questions. So, Jared, let's see how this thing works.

Education Reform

Jared Bernstein. Thank you, Mr. President. Our first question comes from Boston, Massachusetts, on the topic of education: "The Founding Fathers believed that there is no difference between a free society and an educated society. Our educational system, however, is woefully inadequate. How do you plan to restore education as a right and core cultural value in America?"

The President. Well, it's a great question, and—let me see if this mike works so that I'm not stuck at this podium. I'm here only because of the education I received. I wasn't born into wealth, I wasn't born into fame, but I had parents who cared about education and grandparents who cared about education, and I was lucky enough, through scholarships and

sacrifice on the part of my family, to get the best education that America has to offer.

Too many of our children aren't getting that kind of education. It's not because their parents don't believe in the value of education; it's not because these young people are less talented. It's because of two reasons: One, in many cases, our schools are underresourced. There aren't enough teachers; the teachers aren't getting enough of the training they need for the classroom; there's a shortage of supplies. Some of the schools that I visited during the course of traveling around the country just shocked the conscience. There are schools that I've seen that were built in the 1850s that are still being used but haven't been upgraded the way they need to.

Now, there's a second problem, though, and it's one that money alone cannot solve, and that is that we have a school system that was designed for the agricultural era. There's a reason why we've got 3 months off during the summer. That's supposed to be when everybody is working on—out on the farm and bringing in harvest. And it's not just the amount of time our kids are spending, it's how our classrooms are designed, how curriculums are structured, how things like teacher promotion and training happen.

So a lot of times in Washington we get an argument about money versus reform. And the key thing to understand about our education system is we need more resources and we need reform. If we just put more money into a system that's designed for the 19th century and we're in the 21st, we're not going to get the educational outcomes we need. On the other hand, if we talk a lot about reform but we're not willing to put more resources in, that's not going to work.

So let me give you just a couple examples of what we need to do. Early childhood education we know works; let's invest in that. That's what my budget calls for: substantial investment; every dollar we invest in early childhood education, we get potentially $10 back in improved reading scores, reduced dropout rates, reduced delinquency rates, and so forth.

Number two, let's focus on the most important ingredient in the school, and that's the teacher. Let's pay our teachers more money. Let's give them more support. Let's give them more training. Let's make sure that schools of education that are training our teachers are up to date with the best methods to teach our kids. And let's work with teachers so that we are providing them measures of whether they're effective or not, and let's hold them accountable for being effective.

Now that doesn't mean just a single, high-stakes standardized test. It also means that we're working with teachers to determine, what's the best way to discipline—maintain discipline in a classroom? What's the best way to get kids excited about science? Giving them the time and the resources to improve, but also having high standards of expectation in terms of their performance.

If we do early childhood education, if we focus on teacher training, if we invest in math and science education, which is vital—and we're falling behind other countries on that front—then I actually feel pretty confident that we can outcompete any country in the world. But it's going to take more money, and it's going to take more reform, and it's going to take, by the way, openness to innovation on things like charter schools or performance pay. There are a whole range of things that may work, in some cases may not work, but we've got to try some new things, because right now too many of our kids are stuck, and we can't afford to lose them.

Homeownership in America

Mr. Bernstein. The next question is on homeownership, from Heather from Ohio: "President Obama, what benefits from the stimulus plan are there to those of us who are paying our mortgages but living paycheck to paycheck?"

The President. Well, I mentioned this in the opening remarks. This is something that I really want everybody to understand. Our housing plan—and we're devoting $50 billion to it—has a number of different components. One component is setting up a mechanism where people who just can't afford their mortgage right now are able to renegotiate with banks, and the banks lower their interest, and

the homeowner assures that they're going to make a commitment to pay a certain amount every month, and the Government helps to step in to bridge the gap. But the point is, it's going to be cheaper, not only for that family but also potentially for the entire community, if they stay in their home. And so that's—that part of the housing plan is targeted for folks who are really in distress. They're getting close to the point where they might be losing their home.

But there are a whole bunch of folks out there who are not about to walk away from their home, but are getting killed right now because their home values have dropped drastically; they're still making payments, but they're in trouble. And for that huge set of responsible homeowners out there, I want people to understand, what we've done is created mechanisms in the credit markets that have lowered mortgage rates down to historic levels, and what we've done is we've opened it up so that FHA loans that used to be only for people with a certain mortgage level, that we are using FHA and other mechanisms to open up refinancings to a whole bunch of homeowners who previously weren't qualified.

So now what you've got is a situation where 40 percent of the people sitting here, 40 percent of the people who are participating in this virtual town hall, could potentially refinance their mortgage. And they've got to take advantage of that. We are providing additional support from the Government in order to facilitate those refinancings. We're starting to see refinancings go up significantly.

So you have the potential to cut your monthly payments, but you've got to take advantage of it. And if you need more information, you can go on our web site, at the whitehouse.gov, or you can contact your local bank and find out whether you qualify to participate in this refinancing.

Job Creation/National Economy

Mr. Bernstein. Next we have a video question from Harriet in Georgia about bringing jobs back to America.

[*At this point, a video was shown.*]

Q. Hello, President Obama. Here is my question for your online town meeting. When can we expect the jobs that have been outsourced to other countries to come back and be made available to the unemployed workers here in the United States? Thank you so much for all your hard work. God bless you. Bye-bye.

The President. Well, I appreciate that. Let me talk more, first of all, broadly about what's happening in the job market. We have had just a massive loss of jobs over the last several months; it's the kind of job loss we haven't seen at least since the early eighties and maybe since the 1930s, in terms of how quickly we've seen the economy shed jobs.

A lot of that is prompted by the financial crisis and the locking up of the credit markets. And that's why when we are—when we talk about dealing with this credit crisis and the banks, I just want everybody to understand it's not because we're overly concerned about Wall Street or a bunch of CEOs; it's because if we don't fix credit, if we don't get liquidity back to small businesses and large businesses alike who can have that—use that line of credit to buy inventory and to make products and sell services, then those businesses shrivel up, and they start laying people off.

Ultimately, our measure of whether we're doing a good job or not is, are we going to be able to create and save jobs? And part of that involves fixing the financial system.

There is a long-term issue, though, that we have to deal with—and this was true even before the current crisis—and that is that so much of our economic activity was in the financial services sector. It was related to an overheated housing market. It was dependent on huge amounts of consumer saving. And we were seeing those steady declines in manufacturing. We were seeing steady declines in a lot of other productive sectors of the economy. And one of the things that my budget is designed to do is, by fixing our education system, by reducing costs of health care, by going after the clean energy jobs of the future, trying to put our economy on a more solid footing.

Now, a lot of the outsourcing that was referred to in the question really has to do with the fact that our economy, if it's dependent on

low-wage, low-skill labor, it's very hard to hang on to those jobs because there's always a country out there that pays lower wages than the U.S. And so we've got to go after the high-skill, high-wage jobs of the future. That's why it's so important to train our folks more effectively, and that's why it's so important for us to find new industries—building solar panels or wind turbines or the new biofuel—that involve these higher value, higher skill, higher paying jobs.

So I guess the answer to the question is, not all of these jobs are going to come back. And it probably wouldn't be good for our economy for a bunch of these jobs to come back because, frankly, there's no way that people could be getting paid a living wage on some of these jobs, at least in order to be competitive in an international setting.

So what we've got to do is create new jobs that can't be outsourced. And that's why energy is so promising. We've been talking about what's called a smart grid, and some of you may have heard of this. The basic idea is, is that we're still using an electricity grid that dates back 100, 150 years ago. Well, think about all the gizmos you guys are carrying—[*laughter*]—all the phones and the BlackBerrys and the this and the that. You're plugging in all kinds of stuff in your house. We've got an entirely new set of technologies, huge demands in terms of energy, but we've got a grid that's completely outdated.

Now, one of the things that we wanted to do in the stimulus package was to go ahead and start laying a new grid. And to do that, it's like building the transcontinental railroad. You've got to—it's a huge project involving all 50 States.

The benefits of the grid are that we could reduce our energy costs by billions of dollars. We could set up systems so that everybody in each house have their own smart meters that will tell you when to turn off the lights, when the peak hours are, can help you sell back energy that you've generated in your home through a solar panel or through other mechanisms. If we get plug-in hybrid cars, you can plug it in at night and sell back electricity to the utility, and then charge up your car again in the morning before you leave.

All this can be done, but it also creates jobs right now. Our biggest problem, we don't have enough electricians to lay all these lines out there. And these are jobs, these are union jobs that potentially pay $80,000, $90,000 a year, with benefits. But it's a matter of making the investment in infrastructure and also then training the workers to be able to get those jobs. And that's where we're going to be focused on. That's where the job growth is going to occur.

One last point I want to make, and I know I'm not supposed to talk this long, but we're going to have to be patient and persistent about job creation because I don't think that we've lost all the jobs we're going to lose in this recession. We're still going to be in a difficult time for much of this year. Employment is typically what's called a lagging indicator. Now, this is—Dr. Bernstein, he's a Ph.D. economist, so he'll correct me if I'm wrong here, but——

Mr. Bernstein. I'm sure I can make this really confusing. [*Laughter*]

The President. But historically, if you look at every recession, what happens is that when the economy starts getting in trouble, it takes a while before businesses decide, you know what, this economy is in trouble, it's not bouncing back, we'd better start laying off workers. So what we're seeing now is a lot of businesses have decided that our sales are way down, we've got to start shedding workers. And that's going to continue for a while.

Now, the reverse is true as well. When the economy starts recovering, when these businesses start being a little more confident that, you know what, we think we've bottomed out, the recovery package President Obama passed gives us some optimism about making investments in certain areas. It takes a while before they start hiring even if they've started to make these investments.

So the reason I point that out is, I don't want people to think that in 1 or 2 months suddenly we're going to see net job increases. It's going to take some time for the steps that we've taken to filter in. The fact that the

housing market is starting to stabilize a little bit—there's still a lot of inventory out there before people then actually start building new homes. At some point people are going to start buying new cars again, but it's going to take a little bit of time for the automakers to get back on their feet.

So employment is something that we're going to have a difficult time for the next several months, maybe through the end of this year, but I'm confident that we're taking the steps that are required to create these new jobs of the future.

Mr. Bernstein. After the last recession ended in 2001, the unemployment rate went up for another 19 months before it started coming back down.

Health Care Reform

Mr. Bernstein. This next question—an area close to your heart—health care reform, from Richard in California: "Why can we not have a universal health care system, like many European countries, where people are treated based on needs rather than financial resources?"

The President. Well, first of all, I was in this room last month in what we called a health care forum. And we brought all the Members of Congress, Republicans and Democrats, who are interested in this issue; we brought together various constituency groups, insurance companies, drug companies, you name it. And my message to them was: Now is the time to reform the health care system, not 4 years from now, not 8 years from now, not 20 years from now—now.

And the reason—[*applause*]—the reason that I think it is so important is that the high costs of health care are a huge drag on our economy. It's a drag on our families. I can't tell you how many personal stories that I hear about people who are working, maybe have two parents working, and yet still don't have health care. And the decisions that they have to make—excruciating decisions about whether or not somebody goes to a doctor—it makes them less productive; it makes them less mobile in terms of being able to take new jobs or start a new business because they're worried about hanging on to their health care. So it's a drag on families.

But it's a drag on businesses as well. There's not a small business or large business out here who hasn't seen their health care costs skyrocket, and it cuts into their profits.

And it's a drag on the Federal budget and the State budgets. That's the thing that is going to, potentially, break the bank here in the United States. Medicare and Medicaid, if we don't get control of that, that is the biggest driver of our long-term deficits.

So when people—when you hear this budget debate that's taking place right now, and folks say, "Oh, you know, his—President Obama's budget, he's increasing money for veterans and he's increasing money for education, and he's doing all these things that—that's going to bust the budget," what they don't understand is, is that if you add up the recovery package that we've already passed and you add up the various proposals I have to grow the economy through clean energy and all that stuff that we're doing, that amounts to a fraction of the long-term deficit and debt that we're facing. The lion's share of it has to do with Medicare and Medicaid and the huge, rising cost of health care. So our attitude is, better to pay now and make an investment in improving the health care system rather than waiting and finding ourselves in a situation where we can't fix it.

Now, the question is, if you're going to fix it, why not do a universal health care system like the European countries? I actually want a universal health care system; that is our goal. I think we should be able to provide health insurance to every American that they can afford and that provides them high quality. So I think we can accomplish it. Now, whether we do it exactly the way European countries do or Canada does is a different question, because there are a variety of ways to get to universal health care coverage.

A lot of people think that in order to get universal health care, it means that you have to have what's called a single-payer system of some sort. And so Canada is the classic example: Basically, everybody pays a lot of taxes into the health care system, but if you're a Canadian, you're automatically covered. And so you go

in—England has a similar—a variation on this same type of system. You go in and you just say, "I'm sick," and somebody treats you, and that's it.

The problem is, is that we have what's called a legacy, a set of institutions that aren't that easily transformed. Let me just see a show of hands: How many people here have health insurance through your employer? Okay, so the majority of Americans, sort of—partly for a historical accident. I won't go into—FDR had imposed wage controls during war time in World War II. People were—companies were trying to figure out how to attract workers. And they said, "Well, maybe we'll provide health care as a benefit."

And so what evolved in America was an employer-based system. It may not be the best system if we were designing it from scratch, but that's what everybody is accustomed to; that's what everybody is used to. It works for a lot of Americans. And so I don't think the best way to fix our health care system is to suddenly completely scrap what everybody is accustomed to and the vast majority of people already have. Rather, what I think we should do is to build on the system that we have and fill some of these gaps.

And I'm looking to Congress to work with me to find that optimal system. I made some proposals during the campaign about how we can lower costs through information technologies; how we can lower costs through reforms in how we reimburse doctors so that they're not getting paid just for the number of operations they're doing, but for whether they're quality outcomes; investing in prevention so that kids with asthma aren't going to the emergency room, but they're getting regular checkups.

So there are a whole host of things that we can do to cut costs, use that money that we're saving then to provide more coverage to more people. And my expectation is, is that I will have a health care bill to sign this year. That's what we're going to be fighting for; that's what we're going to be striving for.

Can I just interrupt, Jared, before you ask the next question, just to say that we took votes about which questions were going to be asked, and I think 3 million people voted or——

Mr. Bernstein. Three point five million.

The President. Three point five million people voted. I have to say that there was one question that was voted on that ranked fairly high and that was whether legalizing marijuana would improve the economy—[*laughter*]—and job creation. And I don't know what this says about the online audience—[*laughter*]—but I just want—I don't want people to think that—this was a fairly popular question; we want to make sure that it was answered. The answer is, no, I don't think that is a good strategy—[*laughter*]—to grow our economy.

So, all right.

Assistance for U.S. Military Veterans

Mr. Bernstein. Thank you for clearing that up. [*Laughter*] This next question comes from Columbia, South Carolina: "The unemployment rate for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans is higher than the national unemployment rate. Our veterans are a national treasure. How can you, the VA, and I ensure our veterans are successfully transitioning into civilian life?"

The President. That's a great question. You know, I had just an extraordinary honor; yesterday was Medal of Honor Day. And I went to Arlington National Cemetery, and we had a ceremony in front of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier with a collection of Medal of Honor winners from all our various wars.

And a special place of honor was a guy named John Finn, who had been present the day Pearl Harbor was bombed. He was on one of the ships, was shot by—was strafed by the fire from the planes coming in and yet still had the presence of mind to shoot down a plane, and won the Medal of Honor, or was awarded the Medal of Honor for that. And it just reminds you that we wouldn't be here if it hadn't been for the sacrifices of earlier veterans. We would not enjoy the same safety and security and liberty that we do.

So when our veterans come home from Iraq and Afghanistan—and they have performed brilliantly, they have done everything that's been asked of them, regardless of what your views are on these wars—they have earned

these benefits that all too often we fail to give them.

And that's why in my budget we are increasing veterans funding by more than any time in the last 30 years. We're going to make sure that we deal with the—[*applause*]—we're going to make sure that deal with the backlog that too many veterans experience in terms of getting benefits. We're going to make sure that homeless veterans are receiving housing and services.

The homeless rate for veterans is multiple times higher than it is for nonveterans. That's inexcusable. It means that we're going to provide services for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, that we're going to provide services for traumatic brain injury, that are the signature injuries of these recent wars. So we are going to significantly increase veterans spending.

Now, just as is true generally, government alone can't do it. So all of us, individually, are going to have roles. If you're a business owner, hiring a veteran, not discriminating against somebody who's a veteran is going to be absolutely critical. In your communities, in your churches, in your neighborhoods, making sure that there's outreach and celebration of veterans when they come home, that's going to be critical.

I think we've done a much better job during these wars than we did during Vietnam, where in many cases our treatment of veterans was inexcusable. But we can always do more. Government is going to do its role, and then we've got to make sure that our communities do their role as well.

National Service Program/Student Loan Programs

Mr. Bernstein. Mr. President, the next video will be our last Internet question before we turn to the audience for Q&A for followup. Let me also note that this question from Alex in Ohio happens to be about the same topic that the Middle Class Task Force is focusing on this month. Let's turn to this.

[*A video was shown.*]

Q. Hi, Mr. President! My name is Alex. My name is Kristin. And I'm Mallory. We are all sophomores at Kent State University in Ohio. We really like the emphasis you've put on education so far in your administration, but we're concerned about higher education. Our question is: What proposals do you have to make college more affordable and to make student loans easier to get? And when will your national service program be available so we can take advantage of the scholarship? Thank you, Mr. President!

The President. That was pretty well done. [*Laughter*] So, well, I am very excited about the possibility that we may be able to get national service done in the next few weeks. National service was a priority for me during the campaign, partly because of my own biography. I found my calling when I became a community organizer working in low-income neighborhoods when I was 22, 23 years old. And it gave me a sense of direction, a sense of service, it helped me grow, it helped me give back. And I think there are young people all across America who are eager for that opportunity.

And so what we said during the campaign was, let's set up a situation where every young person who is so inspired can take advantage of service, and in exchange they will help be able to finance their educations. And I'm confident that we're about to get legislation passed. And once that legislation is passed, I think that before the end of the year, potentially, we can get something implemented on that front.

In addition, what we are also doing is to try to make the student loan and student grant programs that are already in place work better. So just to give you one example, right now a lot of the student loan programs run through banks, but a lot of them go directly to students from the Government, so-called direct loans. The banks make several billion dollars' worth of profits off managing these student loans, which would be okay except for the fact that these loans are guaranteed by the Federal Government.

So the reason banks are able to make money lending you is because there's some risk that you might not pay it back, plus you're giving up the use of your money for—they're giving up the use of their money for a while. If, on the other hand, this is the Government's money and

they're just a pass-through, it doesn't seem very sensible that banks should be making money that way.

So what we've said is let's make all these direct loans, as opposed to having bank intermediaries or—and not just banks—financial services organizations. They can make profits on other things, but let's not have them make profits on this. Let's take those billions of dollars, and that then allows us to either lower student loan rates or expand grants.

And one of the things that we want to do is on the Pell grant program, for example. We want to increase the amount of the Pell grant so that it catches up with inflation, and we want to—we want more young people to be eligible for the Pell grant program. And that's particularly important because anybody who's financed their educations understands that grants are a lot better than loans. And when I was going to college, about—and this was typical for, I think, college students—the average student who needed financial assistance, about 70 percent of it came in grants and about 30 percent of it came in loans. Today, it's reversed: 30 percent come in grants; 70 percent come in loans. And so students are loaded up with $20,000, $30,000, $40,000 worth of debt. And this is just for their undergraduate education; that doesn't even start counting their higher ed.

And if you come out of college with $50,000 worth of debt, it's hard for you to then start making a decision about wanting to be a teacher or wanting to go into social work or wanting to be a scientist and research to find the next innovation. You may decide, "Well, the only thing I can do is to work on Wall Street or work in a big corporation that's not doing cutting-edge research."

And we want people—all that's fine, I mean, those are good career choices—but we want our young people to have more flexibility. Not to mention, we want them to be able to—if they choose to get married, to be able to buy a home and start a family without already having essentially a mortgage that they're carrying with them out of college, before they even buy a house.

So we're going to spend—this is another area where we devote a considerable amount of money in our budget. And I just want to remind you of this, because we're having this budget debate in Washington right now. And again, everybody says—a lot of the critics out there are saying, "How is it that you're going to be spending all this money? We've got to worry about the deficit, et cetera."

I just want to remind you that the money that we are spending on education, on health care, and on energy, if you added up all that increased money that we're spending, it still is not what's driving our long-term deficits. What's driving it is Medicare, Medicaid, a structural gap that we have because of the Bush tax cuts over the last several years that left us spending a lot more than we were saving.

And it's going to take us a while to dig our way out of that problem. But the way to dig our way out of that problem is not to shortchange investments in our people. A lot of—I'll bet there are a bunch of families here who are making some tough choices right now, and are—who are scrimping a little bit and saving.

Now, somebody could make the same argument to you that folks are making to us with respect to the budget, which is, you can't afford to be sending your kids to college right now. That's fiscally irresponsible. You're taking out debt for your kids to get an education. It's better for you to just put them to work right now at Mickey—at a fast food place, and they'll be bringing in a little bit of income. And maybe later they can go to college.

Well, most of us don't make that decision, because we understand that making the investment now will lead to greater opportunity, greater economic advancement later. Well, the same thing is true in our economy. We can't shortchange the investments that will allow us to grow in the future.

We're going to have to impose discipline and eliminate programs that don't work, and we're doing that. We're cutting this budget by $2 trillion. And we're cutting the deficit in half by the end of my first term. But what we can't shortchange are those things that are going to

allow us to grow long term. I don't want us to constrict and reduce our ambitions, and our—and set our sights lower for our kids and the next generation, because we weren't willing to make those investments now. That's not how America works.

All right. So now—the folks here have been very patient, so all of you who are watching this live streaming online, we're actually going to have some live stuff instead of some virtual stuff. We're going to ask—get some questions or comments from the audience. And I'm going to go boy, girl, boy, girl—[*laughter*]—to avoid anybody being mad at me. And we'll start right there, yes. And we've got some microphones so everybody can hear you.

U.S. Auto Industry

Q. Mr. President, my name is Ellie. I'm from Maryland, but I'm originally from Michigan. I have family members who work for GM and Ford. I know the top executives have made—of the auto companies—have made a lot of bad moves over the years, but I can't imagine the suffering that we would see in the Midwest if these companies went under. So my question to you is, what specific steps do you see your administration taking about the health of the auto industry?

The President. Okay. It is a very topical question because I'm going to be making some announcements over the next several days about the auto industry. I don't want to make all the news here today, so I'm not going to be as specific as you'd like, but I guarantee in the next few days you will have a very extensive answer on what we need to do.

Let me give you my general philosophical approach, and that is that we need to preserve a U.S. auto industry. I think that's important. I think it's important not just symbolically; it's important because the auto industry is a huge employer, not just the people who work for GM or Ford or Chrysler, but all the suppliers, all the ripple effects that are created as a consequence of our auto industry. But my job is also to protect taxpayers. And you're right, there's been a lot of mismanagement of the auto industry over the last several years.

Now, right now, we are in such a bad crisis that even Toyota is losing a whole lot of money. So typically you're looking at $14 million—or 14 million new cars are sold every year. Is that right, Jared, in an average year for our population? It's gone down to 9. Everybody has pulled back, partly because of the credit crunch, people couldn't get auto loans; people were worried about, am I going to keep my job, so they decided let's put off buying the new car. The point is, is that you've seen this huge dropoff. So every automaker is getting killed right now.

I think it is appropriate for us to say, are there ways that we can provide help for the U.S. auto industry to get through this very difficult time, but the price is that you've got to finally restructure to deal with these long-standing problems. And that means that everybody is going to have to give a little bit—shareholders, workers, creditors, suppliers, dealers—everybody is going to have to recognize that the current model, economic model, of the U.S. auto industry is unsustainable. Even if sales go back to 14 million, which eventually they will, it's still a model that doesn't work. They're—just trying to build more and more SUVs and counting on gas prices being low and that's your only profit margin, that's just not a model that's going to work.

So what we're expecting is that the automakers are going to be working with us to restructure. We will provide them some help. I know that it is not popular to provide help to autoworkers—or to auto companies. But my job is to measure the costs of allowing these auto companies just to collapse versus us figuring out, can they come up with a viable plan? If they're not willing to make the changes and the restructurings that are necessary, then I'm not willing to have taxpayer money chase after bad money.

And so a lot of it's going to depend on their willingness to make some pretty drastic changes. And some of those are still going to be painful because I think you're not going to see a situation where the U.S. automakers are gaining the kind of share that they had back in the 1950s. I mean, we just didn't have any competition when—back then, Japan was in rubble, Europe was in rubble—we were the only players

around. And that's not going to be true. This is going to be a competitive global market. We have to make those adjustments.

All right. Okay. It's a gentleman's turn. All right, this gentleman right here. We got a microphone behind you.

Federal Procurement System/Government Contracts

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. My name is Carlos Del Toro. I served in the Navy for 26 years, retired 4 years ago, and started a small business. So I first want to thank you for all the efforts that you and your administration has done on behalf of veterans and also on behalf of small businesses.

The President. Well, we appreciate your service. Thank you.

Q. Thank you, sir. My question is, one of the things that I have experienced over the last 4 years as a small business trying to do business in the Federal procurement business, essentially, as a small engineering company, is the challenge of the bundling of contracts, which has made it increasingly difficult for service-disabled businesses—all small businesses across the Nation—to compete, basically, within the Federal procurement system. I know that you believe in fair and open competition on a broad basis. I would suggest to you, and my question to you is, will your administration look at this issue and try to unbundle these contracts that make it more competitive for small businesses to work in the Federal marketplace?

The President. It's a great question. It's an issue that I'm familiar with. Just by way of background for people who aren't as familiar with Federal purchasing, the Federal Government is such a big customer that sometimes for administrative convenience, what they do is they just say, "Here, Halliburton, here's a contract for $20 billion to do all these various things, and then you sort of figure out how you're going to divvy it up." Well, it may be that—I'm sorry, what was your name?

Q. Carlos.

The President. It may be that Carlos has a better product to sell——

Q. You're right. [*Laughter*]

The President. ——you know, for a segment of that contract, but he can't bid on the entire thing, right? And so what ends up happening is he—the taxpayer loses the benefit of a better product at a better price because everything is bundled into this huge contract with a giant general contractor who then divvies up the business.

So one of the things that we're trying to figure out is, are there are ways that we can unbundle and unpackage some of these goods and services that the Government purchases. It'll save taxpayers' money; it'll promote more competition. He's—Carlos is still going to have to bid. He's still going to have to prove that his price is better and his product is better, but at least he's got a chance.

Now, we're not going to be able to do that on everything, because there are some things that, frankly, you need some economies of scale, right? But what we want to do is make sure that we're looking for every opportunity to unbundle, to give everybody a chance to compete so that we don't just have one or two or three major contractors who are getting every contract. Because at a certain point what ends up happening is those contractors get so much clout in Washington, they're getting such huge contracts, then they start spending a million dollars on lobbyists to make sure that the contracts keep going the same way. You start seeing the system distorted in ways that aren't healthy. And the more players there are, the more Carloses there are who are out there scratching and striving to get some business, ultimately, the better deal we'll get as taxpayers.

So, great. Okay. Here you go.

Nurses

Q. My name is Linda Bock, and I'm a registered nurse just in Prince George's County, Maryland—been there 34 years at a free senior health center. And I'm here with my fellow nurses from SEIU. First of all, thank you for listening to us, because as nurses we do listen to our patients all the time. We're their advocate.

The President. Absolutely.

Q. And so we appreciate this opportunity for you to hear from us. One of the things we want to make sure is that nurses are represented in the health care forum committees—reform committees because we want to be there on behalf of our fellow nurses and on behalf of the patients that we sometimes have to speak up for. So I really hope that we can be there so we can push the things like prevention and education that are so very important so that we don't use our emergency rooms for their doctor visits and that we have more community-based health centers for those that are in need. And I just—I really appreciate this opportunity to be heard.

The President. Good. Well, I appreciate that. I guarantee you nurses were part of the health care summit, and they will be at the table in all these discussions. I'm biased towards nurses, I just like nurses—[*laughter*]. When Michelle and I went in and Malia was being born, the ob-gyn was a close friend of ours and so was much more attentive than the usual ob-gyn might be. But the fact is, we only saw her for, like, 15 minutes. The rest of the time, it was nurses who were doing everything. When Sasha, our little precious pea—[*laughter*]—when she got meningitis when she was 3 months old—very dangerous. The doctors did a terrific job, but, frankly, it was the nurses that were there with us when she had to get a spinal tap and all sorts of things that were just bringing me to tears.

And we've got a problem in this country, which is we have a shortage of nurses—makes no sense, given this unemployment rate. But the reason is, is because the pay of nurses, the hours of nurses, the quality of life of nurses, the fact that nurse professors are even worse paid than the nurses themselves, so that you get these huge bottlenecks in terms of training as many nurses as we want.

I mean, all these issues are part of the inefficiency of the health care system that has to be fixed. And the more we're emphasizing primary care, preventive care, wellness—all of which will save us money in the long term—the more that we can deploy nurses as the troops on the frontlines in, ultimately, driving down some of these health care costs.

So I think it's very important that nurses are a part of this process.

So, here, Ed. We've got a mike. I'm hanging on to my mike. [*Laughter*]

Small-Business Owners/Taxes

Q. Yes, sir.

The President. I might not get it back. [*Laughter*]

Q. Sir, you're the President, you always get it back. [*Laughter*] Sir, I'm Tom Sawner. I'm a service-disabled veteran, small-business owner in Arlington, Virginia. My company, Educational Options, works with public schools. We serve more than 200,000 at-risk kids within public schools, providing online content, partnering with teachers, and I was honored to serve on your education platform committee.

The President. Wonderful.

Q. Today my question is, as a small-business owner, my company is still profitable. We're still growing; we're still hiring. The money that I make as a profit, I'm plowing right back in, and even the money that I pay to the bank for my business loans. Yet under current tax laws, all of that counts as income to me before I ever see a penny of it.

Sir, could you please help small businesses by allowing, some way, somehow, money we pay to the bank in principle to not count against our income, and put us in the "richest" before we ever seem a dime, and allow us to invest in this huge engine to drive economic recovery?

And a final question: As a veteran, would you please see if we can enforce the existing laws for veteran and other small-business set-asides? Thank you, sir.

The President. Okay, good. Well, thank you for the question. Obviously, I'm not completely familiar with your circumstances or your tax status. But we want to do everything we can to relieve the tax burden on startups and small businesses, and as they grow, then their tax burden is going to grow accordingly.

So one of the things that we have already proposed and is reflected in our budget, is that we are eliminating capital gains taxes for small businesses. That's something that we've already proposed and put in place.

Now, what'll happen is, you won't see that reflected in an immediate benefit because it will kick in 5 years from now. The law starts now,

but you have to have those capital gains accumulate over the course of 5 years before it counts, because we don't want people gaming the system. But that's an example of the kinds of tools that we are already putting in place in the Tax Code to provide you relief, so that as you're reinvesting, that you are not penalized for that reinvestment.

And we will do everything we can to enforce the existing rules with regard to small businesses for veterans.

Q. Thank you, sir.

The President. Okay, this young lady back here.

Education Reform

Q. Hi, Mr. President. Thank you so very much for having me, a public school teacher from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, here to be with you.

The President. What's your name?

Q. Bonnee Breese.

The President. Good to see you, Bonnee.

Q. Thank you. I'm from Overbrook High School. I have to say that, because I know all the children are watching. [*Laughter*]

The President. Okay. All right. Hello, Overbrook. [*Laughter*] There you go.

Q. Thank you. Two questions in reference of education, since this is a major part of your budget plan and platform. Definitions of charter schools and definitions of effective teachers—how do you plan to define those two categories? And are you willing to have teachers on the platform, in the committees, as a part of developing those plans?

The President. Oh, absolutely. Well, as I said, the teachers are the most important person in the education system. So if we don't have teacher buy-in, if they're not enthusiastic about the reforms that we're initiating, then, ultimately, they're not going to work. So we've got to have teacher participation in developing these approaches.

The definition of charter schools is pretty straightforward. And that is that in most States you now have a mechanism where you set up a public school—so this is not private schools, these are public schools receiving public dollars—but they have a charter that allows them to experiment and try new things. And typically, they're partnering up with some sort of non-for-profit institution.

So in Chicago, you've got charter schools that are affiliated with a museum, or they're affiliated with an arts program, and they may have a particular focus. It may be a science charter school, or it may be a language academy. They are still going to have to meet all the various requirements of a State-mandated curriculum; they're still subject to the same rules and regulations and accountability. But they've got some flexibility in terms of how they design it. Oftentimes, they are getting parents to participate in new ways in the school. So they become laboratories of new and creative learning.

Now, there are some charter schools that are doing a great job, and you are seeing huge increases in student performance. And by the way—one last point I want to make about these charters—they're nonselective, so it's not a situation where they're just cherry-picking the kids who are already getting the highest grades; they've got to admit anybody. And typically there are long waiting lines, so they use some sort of lottery to admit them.

Some of them are doing great work, huge, huge progress, and great innovation; and there's some charters that haven't worked out so well. And just like bad—or regular schools, they need to be shut down if they're not doing a good job. But what charters do is they give an opportunity for experimentation and then duplication of success. And we want to encourage that. So that's the definition of charters.

In terms of teachers, how we measure performance—as I said before, I have been a critic of measuring performance just by the administering of a single, high-stakes standardized test during the year, and then the teacher is judged. And that was, I think, the biggest problem with No Child Left Behind. It basically said that you just go in—[*applause*]—here's the standardized test, we'll see how the kids are doing. And because it doesn't even measure progress, you could have a very good teacher or a very good school in a poor area where test scores have typically been low,

and they are still punished even though they're doing heroic work in a difficult situation.

The other problem is that you started seeing curriculums and teachers teaching to the test, not because they want to, but because there's such a huge stake in doing well on these tests that suddenly the science curriculum, instead of it being designed around sparking people's creativity and their interests in science, it ends up just being, here's the test, here's what you have to learn, which the average kid is already squirming enough in their seat; now they're thinking, well, this is completely dull, this is completely uninteresting. And they get turned off from science or math or all these wonderful subjects that, potentially, they could be passionate about.

So what we want to do is not completely eliminate standardized tests; there's a role for standardized tests. All of us have taken them, and they serve a function. We just don't want it to be the only thing. So we want to work with teachers to figure out how do we get peer review, how do we have evaluation—I was just talking to Bill Gates yesterday, and he was talking about the use of technology where you can use videos to look at really successful teachers and how they interact with their students, how they're monitoring students, et cetera, and then you bring in the teachers at the end of the day and, just like a coach might be talking to his players about how you see how on that play you should have been here and you could have done that—same thing with teachers.

But they don't get that feedback. Usually, especially beginning teachers are completely isolated. They're in this classroom; they're sort of just thrown in to sink or swim. Instead, let's use a variety of mechanisms to assess and constantly improve teacher performance.

Now, one thing I have to say, I know you'll admit this, although maybe you can't on TV, but if—in private I'll bet you'd admit that during the—how long have you been teaching?

Q. I've been teaching for 15 years and at Overbrook for 8 years.

The President. Fifteen years. Okay, so you've been teaching for 15 years. I'll bet you'll admit that during those 15 years there have been a couple of teachers that you've met—you don't have to say their names—[*laugher*]—who you would not put your child in their classroom. [*Laughter*] See? Right? You're not saying anything. [*Laughter*] You're taking the Fifth. [*Laughter*]

My point is that if we've done everything we can to improve teacher pay and teacher performance and training and development, some people just aren't meant to be teachers, just like some people aren't meant to be carpenters, some people aren't meant to be nurses. At some point they've got to find a new career.

And it can't be impossible to move out bad teachers, because that brings—that makes everybody depressed in a school, if there are some folks—and it makes it harder for the teachers who are inheriting these kids the next year for doing their job.

So there's got to be some accountability measures built in to this process. But I'm optimistic that we can make real progress on this front. But it's going to take some time. So, all right?

Mr. Bernstein. Mr. President, we have——

The President. How many times——

Mr. Bernstein. One more question, please.

The President. Oh, one more question. Now, yelling—just saying it right here is not going to get you the question. [*Laughter*] You know what I'm going to do, is—I hope I don't seem biased here; I'm going to go with a young person here. Last question—at least younger than me. [*Laughter*]

Health Care Reform

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. My name is Sergio Salmeron. I want to find out about health care. In a society, a lot of times we have to step back and ask ourselves if what we're doing in principle, not in practice, is right. And so when we think about health care, I want to know from you if the things like preexisting conditions and preventive medicine, if they are a symptom of what's going on in our health care system, then what is the problem and how do you address it?

The President. Well, I'll talk to you about preexisting conditions, because this is something that I talked about during the campaign; it's something that touched on me personally.

My mother contracted ovarian cancer when she was 53, and she died 6 months later. It's one of those cancers that typically is diagnosed very—at late stages; it's hard to catch early.

She was at the time working as an independent contractor. She was working for an international assistance organization. And so she had insurance, but when she was diagnosed and she started—and the medical bills started mounting up, some of—this insurance company started saying that this is a preexisting condition, so maybe we don't have to reimburse you. And we had to spend a bunch of time fighting with these insurance companies about this issue.

Now, eventually we were lucky, we got these costs approved, because the point was, she didn't know, nobody had diagnosed it, and if you start having a—the standard of preexisting condition is you might have had that illness some time at some point before you—or you were genetically predisposed to it, potentially, none of us would ever get any insurance.

So—but I still remember watching her—you know, she's sick, she's going through chemotherapy, and she's on the phone arguing with insurance companies. And she's lucky she had insurance. There are tons of people out there who, once they've had one heart attack, once they've been diagnosed with diabetes, once they've got some form of chronic illness, from that point forward it is almost impossible for them to get health insurance. And if their employer, especially if it's a small employer, wants to give them health insurance, it's the costs are so prohibitive that they can't do it even if the employer wants to help them.

I mean, if Carlos has got a small business, if—I don't know how many employees he has, but if he has 10 employees, 22 employees, and if one of them got a serious illness like leukemia, it would send his insurance rates skyrocketing to a point where he just couldn't operate.

So this is why any reform of the health care system, I think, has to address this issue and to say we are going to allow anybody to get health insurance. And if you've got a preexisting condition you're not going to be excluded but you're going to be able to obtain health insurance. And if you can't obtain it through a private plan then there is going to be a public plan that is available in some way to give you insurance, or insurers are obligated to provide you with insurance in some way.

Now that's a principle. What are the details of how we're going to do that? There are a lot of different approaches. We have seen some progress with the insurance companies where they have said, "We are willing to take everybody in, but only if everybody is required to be in." That's the position that they're taking right now. So the idea is you combine a rule that eliminates preexisting condition exclusions with mandatory health insurance, just like auto insurance is mandatory. That's a proposal they've put forward.

Now, that's progress in the sense that they've acknowledged that this preexisting condition situation is a real problem. Whether that ends up being the best mechanism—during the campaign, I was skeptical of mandates only because my attitude was the reason people don't have health insurance is not because they don't want it, it's because they can't afford it. And if we drive down cost, then people will have it. But that's part of the debate that's going to be taking place over the next several months as we try to develop a health care plan for the future.

Okay? Listen, I know that there were other people who had questions, both here in the live audience, as well as in our virtual audience. But we're out of time. I just want to say thank you for participating. Thanks for paying attention. And we need you guys to keep paying attention in the months and years to come.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:39 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jared Bernstein, Chief Economist and Economic Policy Adviser to Vice President Joe Biden, who introduced the President; Lt. John W. Finn, USN (Ret.); and William H. Gates III, chairman, Microsoft.

Statement on the 30th Anniversary of the Peace Treaty Between Egypt and Israel
March 26, 2009

Today marks the anniversary of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, signed 30 years ago at the White House.

As we commemorate this historic event, we recall that peace is always possible even in the face of seemingly intractable conflicts. The success of Prime Minister Begin, President Sadat, and President Carter, begun at Camp David, demonstrated that progress results from sustained efforts at communication and cooperation. While much work remains, we honor the courage and foresight of these leaders, who stood together in unity to change the course of our shared history.

Today, as we seek to expand the circle of peace among Arabs and Israelis, we take inspiration from what Israel and Egypt achieved three decades ago, knowing that the destination is worthy of the struggle.

Statement on Senate Passage of Legislation to Promote Voluntarism
March 26, 2009

I'm so pleased that the Senate overwhelmingly passed the bipartisan Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, legislation that will usher in a new era of service. I want to applaud all those who have worked so hard to see this bill through, and I am eager to sign it into law.

This legislation will help create new opportunities for millions of Americans at all stages of their lives, from improving service learning in schools to creating an army of 250,000 volunteers a year dedicated to addressing our Nation's toughest problems, from connecting working Americans to a variety of part-time service opportunities to better utilizing the skills and experience of our retirees and baby boomers. This legislation will help tap the genius of our faith-based and community organizations, and it will find the most innovative ideas for addressing our common challenges and helping those ideas grow.

It is fitting that this legislation is named after Ted Kennedy, a person who has never stopped asking what he could do for his country. This legislation is not just a tribute to the service to which he has dedicated his life, it is a call to action for the rest of us. Our work is not finished when I sign this bill into law; it has just begun. While our Government can provide every opportunity imaginable for us to serve our communities, it is up to each of us to seize those opportunities, to do our part to lift up our fellow Americans, to realize our own true potential.

I call on all Americans to stand up and do what they can to serve their communities, shape our history, and enrich both their own lives and the lives of others across this country.

Remarks on United States Military and Diplomatic Strategies for Afghanistan and Pakistan
March 27, 2009

Good morning. Please be seated. Before I begin today, let me acknowledge, first of all, Your Excellencies, all the Ambassadors who are in attendance. I also want to acknowledge both the civilians and our military personnel that are about to be deployed to the region. And I am very grateful to all of you for your extraordinary work.

I want to acknowledge General David Petraeus, who's here and has been doing an outstanding job at CENTCOM; we appreciate him. I want to thank Bruce Riedel—Bruce is

down at the end here—who has worked extensively on our strategic review. I want to acknowledge Karl Eikenberry, who's here, and is our Ambassador-designate to Afghanistan. And to my national security team, thanks for their outstanding work.

Today I'm announcing a comprehensive, new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan. And this marks the conclusion of a careful policy review, led by Bruce, that I ordered as soon as I took office. My administration has heard from our military commanders as well as our diplomats. We've consulted with the Afghan and Pakistani Governments, with our partners and our NATO allies, and with other donors and international organizations. We've also worked closely with Members of Congress here at home. And now I'd like to speak clearly and candidly to the American people.

The situation is increasingly perilous. It's been more than 7 years since the Taliban was removed from power, yet war rages on and insurgents control parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Attacks against our troops, our NATO allies, and the Afghan Government have risen steadily. And most painfully, 2008 was the deadliest year of the war for American forces.

Many people in the United States, and many in partner countries that have sacrificed so much, have a simple question: What is our purpose in Afghanistan? After so many years, they ask, why do our men and women still fight and die there? And they deserve a straightforward answer.

So let me be clear: Al Qaida and its allies, the terrorists who planned and supported the 9/11 attacks, are in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Multiple intelligence estimates have warned that Al Qaida is actively planning attacks on the United States homeland from its safe haven in Pakistan. And if the Afghan Government falls to the Taliban or allows Al Qaida to go unchallenged, that country will again be a base for terrorists who want to kill as many of our people as they possibly can.

The future of Afghanistan is inextricably linked to the future of its neighbor Pakistan. In the nearly 8 years since 9/11, Al Qaida and its extremist allies have moved across the border to the remote areas of the Pakistani frontier. This almost certainly includes Al Qaida's leadership, Usama bin Laden and Ayman Al-Zawahiri. They have used this mountainous terrain as a safe haven to hide, to train terrorists, to communicate with followers, to plot attacks, and to send fighters to support the insurgency in Afghanistan. For the American people, this border region has become the most dangerous place in the world.

But this is not simply an American problem—far from it—it is, instead, an international security challenge of the highest order. Terrorist attacks in London and Bali were tied to Al Qaida and its allies in Pakistan, as were attacks in North Africa and the Middle East, in Islamabad and in Kabul. If there is a major attack on an Asian, European, or African city, it too is likely to have ties to Al Qaida's leadership in Pakistan. The safety of people around the world is at stake.

For the Afghan people, a return to Taliban rule would condemn their country to brutal governance, international isolation, a paralyzed economy, and the denial of basic human rights to the Afghan people, especially women and girls. The return in force of Al Qaida terrorists who would accompany the core Taliban leadership would cast Afghanistan under the shadow of perpetual violence.

As President, my greatest responsibility is to protect the American people. We are not in Afghanistan to control that country or to dictate its future. We are in Afghanistan to confront a common enemy that threatens the United States, our friends and our allies, and the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan who have suffered the most at the hands of violent extremists.

So I want the American people to understand that we have a clear and focused goal to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaida in Pakistan and Afghanistan and to prevent their return to either country in the future. That's the goal that must be achieved; that is a cause that could not be more just. And to the terrorists who oppose us, my message is the same: We will defeat you.

To achieve our goals, we need a stronger, smarter, and comprehensive strategy. To focus on the greatest threat to our people, America

must no longer deny resources to Afghanistan because of the war in Iraq. To enhance the military, governance, and economic capacity of Afghanistan and Pakistan, we have to marshal international support. And to defeat an enemy that heeds no borders or laws of war, we must recognize the fundamental connection between the future of Afghanistan and Pakistan, which is why I've appointed Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, who is here, to serve as Special Representative for both countries and to work closely with General Petraeus to integrate our civilian and military efforts.

Let me start by addressing the way forward in Pakistan. The United States has great respect for the Pakistani people. They have a rich history and have struggled against long odds to sustain their democracy. The people of Pakistan want the same things that we want: an end to terror, access to basic services, the opportunity to live their dreams, and the security that can only come with the rule of law. The single greatest threat to that future comes from Al Qaida and their extremist allies, and that is why we must stand together.

The terrorists within Pakistan's borders are not simply enemies of America or Afghanistan, they are a grave and urgent danger to the people of Pakistan. Al Qaida and other violent extremists have killed several thousand Pakistanis since 9/11. They've killed many Pakistani soldiers and police. They assassinated Benazir Bhutto. They've blown up buildings, derailed foreign investment, and threatened the stability of the state. So make no mistake: Al Qaida and its extremist allies are a cancer that risks killing Pakistan from within.

It's important for the American people to understand that Pakistan needs our help in going after Al Qaida. This is no simple task. The tribal regions are vast, they are rugged, and they are often ungoverned. And that's why we must focus our military assistance on the tools, training, and support that Pakistan needs to root out the terrorists. And after years of mixed results, we will not, and cannot, provide a blank check. Pakistan must demonstrate its commitment to rooting out Al Qaida and the violent extremists within its borders. And we will insist that action be taken, one way or another, when we have intelligence about high-level terrorist targets.

The Government's ability to destroy these safe havens is tied to its own strength and security. To help Pakistan weather the economic crisis, we must continue to work with the IMF, the World Bank, and other international partners. To lessen tensions between two nuclear-armed nations that too often teeter on the edge of escalation and confrontation, we must pursue constructive diplomacy with both India and Pakistan. To avoid the mistakes of the past, we must make clear that our relationship with Pakistan is grounded in support for Pakistan's democratic institutions and the Pakistani people. And to demonstrate through deeds as well as words a commitment that is enduring, we must stand for lasting opportunity.

A campaign against extremism will not succeed with bullets or bombs alone. Al Qaidas offers the people of Pakistan nothing but destruction. We stand for something different. So today I am calling upon Congress to pass a bipartisan bill cosponsored by John Kerry and Richard Lugar that authorizes $1.5 billion in direct support to the Pakistani people every year over the next 5 years, resources that will build schools and roads and hospitals and strengthen Pakistan's democracy. I'm also calling on Congress to pass a bipartisan bill cosponsored by Maria Cantwell, Chris Van Hollen, and Peter Hoekstra that creates opportunity zones in the border regions to develop the economy and bring hope to places plagued with violence. And we will ask our friends and allies to do their part, including at the donors conference in Tokyo next month.

I don't ask for this support lightly. These are challenging times; resources are stretched. But the American people must understand that this is a downpayment on our own future, because the security of America and Pakistan is shared. Pakistan's Government must be a stronger partner in destroying these safe havens, and we must isolate Al Qaida from the Pakistani people. And these steps in Pakistan are also indispensable to our efforts in Afghanistan, which will see no end to violence if insurgents move freely back and forth across the border.

Security demands a new sense of shared responsibility. And that's why we will launch a standing, trilateral dialog among the United States, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Our nations will meet regularly, with Secretaries Clinton and Secretary Gates leading our effort. Together, we must enhance intelligence sharing and military cooperation along the border, while addressing issues of common concern like trade, energy, and economic development.

This is just one part of a comprehensive strategy to prevent Afghanistan from becoming the Al Qaida safe haven that it was before 9/11. To succeed, we and our friends and allies must reverse the Taliban's gains and promote a more capable and accountable Afghan Government.

Our troops have fought bravely against a ruthless enemy. Our civilians have made great sacrifices. Our allies have borne a heavy burden. Afghans have suffered and sacrificed for their future. But for 6 years, Afghanistan has been denied the resources that it demands because of the war in Iraq. Now, we must make a commitment that can accomplish our goals.

I've already ordered the deployment of 17,000 troops that had been requested by General McKiernan for many months. These soldiers and marines will take the fight to the Taliban in the south and the east and give us a greater capacity to partner with Afghan security forces and to go after insurgents along the border. This push will also help provide security in advance of the important Presidential elections in Afghanistan in August.

At the same time, we will shift the emphasis of our mission to training and increasing the size of Afghan security forces, so that they can eventually take the lead in securing their country. That's how we will prepare Afghans to take responsibility for their security, and how we will ultimately be able to bring our own troops home.

For 3 years, our commanders have been clear about the resources they need for training. And those resources have been denied because of the war in Iraq. Now, that will change. The additional troops that we deployed have already increased our training capacity. And later this spring, we will deploy approximately 4,000 U.S. troops to train Afghan security forces. For the first time, this will truly resource our effort to train and support the Afghan Army and police. Every American unit in Afghanistan will be partnered with an Afghan unit, and we will seek additional trainers from our NATO allies to ensure that every Afghan unit has a coalition partner. We will accelerate our efforts to build an Afghan Army of 134,000 and a police force of 82,000 so that we can meet these goals by 2011, and increases in Afghan forces may very well be needed as our plans to turn over security responsibility to the Afghans go forward.

This push must be joined by a dramatic increase in our civilian effort. Afghanistan has an elected government, but it is undermined by corruption and has difficulty delivering basic services to its people. The economy is undercut by a booming narcotics trade that encourages criminality and funds the insurgency. The people of Afghanistan seek the promise of a better future. Yet once again, we've seen the hope of a new day darkened by violence and uncertainty.

So to advance security, opportunity, and justice—not just in Kabul, but from the bottom up in the Provinces—we need agricultural specialists and educators, engineers and lawyers. That's how we can help the Afghan Government serve its people and develop an economy that isn't dominated by illicit drugs. And that's why I'm ordering a substantial increase in our civilians on the ground. That's also why we must seek civilian support from our partners and allies, from the United Nations and international aid organizations, an effort that Secretary Clinton will carry forward next week in The Hague.

At a time of economic crisis, it's tempting to believe that we can shortchange this civilian effort. But make no mistake: Our efforts will fail in Afghanistan and Pakistan if we don't invest in their future. And that's why my budget includes indispensable investments in our State Department and foreign assistance programs. These investments relieve the burden on our troops. They contribute directly to security. They make the American people safer.

And they save us an enormous amount of money in the long run, because it's far cheaper to train a policeman to secure his or her own village than to help a farmer seed a crop—or to help a farmer seed a crop than it is to send our troops to fight tour after tour of duty with no transition to Afghan responsibility.

As we provide these resources, the days of unaccountable spending, no-bid contracts, and wasteful reconstruction must end. So my budget will increase funding for a strong Inspector General at both State Department and USAID and include robust funding for the Special Inspector Generals for Afghan Reconstruction. And I want to be clear: We cannot turn a blind eye to the corruption that causes Afghans to lose faith in their own leaders. Instead, we will seek a new compact with the Afghan Government that cracks down on corrupt behavior and sets clear benchmarks, clear metrics for international assistance so that it is used to provide for the needs of the Afghan people.

In a country with extreme poverty that's been at war for decades, there will also be no peace without reconciliation among former enemies. Now, I have no illusion that this will be easy. In Iraq, we had success in reaching out to former adversaries to isolate and target Al Qaida in Iraq. We must pursue a similar process in Afghanistan, while understanding that it is a very different country.

There is an uncompromising core of the Taliban. They must be met with force, and they must be defeated. But there are also those who've taken up arms because of coercion or simply for a price. These Afghans must have the option to choose a different course. And that's why we will work with local leaders, the Afghan Government, and international partners to have a reconciliation process in every Province. As their ranks dwindle, an enemy that has nothing to offer the Afghan people but terror and repression must be further isolated. And we will continue to support the basic human rights of all Afghans, including women and girls.

And going forward, we will not blindly stay the course. Instead, we will set clear metrics to measure progress and hold ourselves accountable. We'll consistently assess our efforts to train Afghan security forces and our progress in combating insurgents. We will measure the growth of Afghanistan's economy and its illicit narcotics production. And we will review whether we are using the right tools and tactics to make progress towards accomplishing our goals.

None of the steps that I've outlined will be easy; none should be taken by America alone. The world cannot afford the price that will come due if Afghanistan slides back into chaos or Al Qaida operates unchecked. We have a shared responsibility to act, not because we seek to project power for its own sake, but because our own peace and security depends on it. And what's at stake at this time is not just our own security, it's the very idea that free nations can come together on behalf of our common security. That was the founding cause of NATO six decades ago, and that must be our common purpose today.

My administration is committed to strengthening international organizations and collective action, and that will be my message next week in Europe. As America does more, we will ask others to join us in doing their part. From our partners and NATO allies, we will seek not simply troops, but rather clearly defined capabilities: supporting the Afghan elections, training Afghan security forces, a greater civilian commitment to the Afghan people. For the United Nations, we seek greater progress for its mandate to coordinate international action and assistance and to strengthen Afghan institutions.

And finally, together with the United Nations, we will forge a new contact group for Afghanistan and Pakistan that brings together all who should have a stake in the security of the region, our NATO allies and other partners, but also the Central Asian states, the Gulf nations and Iran, Russia, India, and China. None of these nations benefit from a base for Al Qaida terrorists and a region that descends into chaos. All have a stake in the promise of lasting peace and security and development.

And that is true, above all, for the coalition that has fought together in Afghanistan, side by side with Afghans. The sacrifices have been enormous. Nearly 700 Americans have lost their lives; troops from over 20 countries have also paid the ultimate price. All Americans

honor the service and cherish the friendship of those who have fought and worked and bled by our side. And all Americans are awed by the service of our own men and women in uniform, who've borne a burden as great as any other generation's. They and their families embody the example of selfless sacrifice.

I remind everybody, the United States of America did not choose to fight a war in Afghanistan. Nearly 3,000 of our people were killed on September 11, 2001, for doing nothing more than going about their daily lives. Al Qaida and its allies have since killed thousands of people in many countries. Most of the blood on their hands is the blood of Muslims, who Al Qaida has killed and maimed in far greater number than any other people. That is the future that Al Qaida is offering to the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan, a future without hope or opportunity, a future without justice or peace.

So understand, the road ahead will be long and there will be difficult days ahead. But we will seek lasting partnerships with Afghanistan and Pakistan that promise a new day for their people. And we will use all elements of our national power to defeat Al Qaida and to defend America, our allies, and all who seek a better future. Because the United States of America stands for peace and security, justice and opportunity. That is who we are, and that is what history calls on us to do once more.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:40 a.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commander, U.S. Central Command; Bruce Riedel, chair, interagency review on Afghanistan and Pakistan policy; Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; and Gen. David D. McKiernan, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan.

Remarks at an Installation Ceremony for Eric H. Holder, Jr., as Attorney General

March 27, 2009

I am proud to be here today for the installation of my friend Eric Holder as the 82d Attorney General of the United States.

I want to recognize our Deputy Attorney General, David Ogden, for his outstanding service to this Department, both in this tour of duty, and in his last. Where did David go? He was here just a second ago. [*Laughter*] Here he is. Come on out here—that's David. I'd like to thank Special Agent Earl Camp for starting things off with the Pledge of Allegiance and for his tremendous sacrifice for this Nation. Thanks also to Members of Congress who have joined us, to President Steven Knapp for hosting us, and to Judge Robert Richter for administering the oath. Thank you very much.

I also want to welcome Eric's entire family, who is here today. Like me, Eric married up. [*Laughter*] And we are grateful to his extraordinary wife, Dr. Sharon Malone, and their children Brooke, Maya, and Eric, for sharing him with all of us. So, Sharon, thank you. Thank you, guys.

There are few more important jobs in our Nation's Government than that of Attorney General. As President, I swore an oath to preserve, protect, and defend our Constitution. And as Eric himself has said, it is the Attorney General who serves as the guardian of that revered document that is the basis of our laws and the driving force of our democracy.

And that's what's always distinguished this Nation, that we are bound together not by a shared bloodline or allegiance to any one leader or faith or creed, but by an adherence to a set of ideals. That's the core notion of our founding, that ours is a government of laws, and not men. It is the motto inscribed on the library of my law school alma mater: "Not under man but under God and law."

But today, as we install the man charged with upholding our laws, we are reminded that

the work of translating law into justice, of ensuring that those words put to paper more than two centuries ago mean something for all of our people, that is a fundamentally human process.

It is what so many of you, the men and women of our Justice Department, do every single day: keeping us safe from terrorist attacks, bringing to justice those who would do us harm, rooting out corruption and fighting violent crime, protecting our markets from manipulation and our environment from pollution, and upholding our most fundamental civil rights.

That's why I sought to appoint an Attorney General who understands that justice isn't about some abstract legal theory or footnote in a casebook. It's about how our laws affect the daily realities of people's lives, whether they can make a living and care for their families, whether they feel safe in their own homes and welcome in their own nation.

I sought someone who recognizes the very real threats we face, but has the wisdom, in those hard-to-call cases, to find that fine balance between ensuring our security and preserving our liberty. And most of all, I was looking for someone who believes deeply enough in the American people's cause to serve as the American people's lawyer.

And taken together, I think that's a pretty good description of our new Attorney General. It's a reflection of how he was raised and of the choices he's made throughout his life. Eric's father came to this country as a boy and served in the Army during the Second World War. And even though he couldn't get served at a lunch counter in the Nation he defended, he never stopped believing in its promise. He and Eric's mother worked hard to seize that promise for their sons and give them every opportunity to succeed.

But Eric was never content to achieve just for himself. Each time he rose, he worked to pull others up with him: mentoring young people in college; working for the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund in law school; distinguishing himself as a prosecutor, a judge, and a leader in this Department. All along working tirelessly to right the balance of power so ordinary people could get a fair shake, all along showing the independence of mind that justice requires, never hesitating to take on members of his own party, including those to whom he owed his job. In fact, several months ago, Eric even had the audacity to comment to a reporter on my basketball skills. [*Laughter*] He said, and I quote—[*laughter*]—here's what he said—he said, "I'm not sure he's ready for my New York game." [*Laughter*] We will see about that, Mr. Attorney General. [*Laughter*]

Now, I can't vouch for Eric's skills on the basketball court, but I can confirm that he is thoroughly prepared to take on the law enforcement challenges of this new century. As a student of history, he also knows history's lessons about what happens when we let politics and ideology cloud our judgment, and let fear and anger, rather than reason, dictate our policy. These are mistakes he will not repeat. Because in the end, Eric comes to this job with only one agenda, to do what is right under the law.

It's no easy task. And it is one that falls to every member of this Department, because our laws are only as effective, only as compassionate, only as fair as those who enforce them. In the end, our Union is only as perfect as we are willing to work for. It endures only to the extent that we are willing to fight for the ideals on which it is based, to do our part as generations before us to breathe new life into them with the more enlightened understandings of our time.

That has always been the core mission of this Department. It is the story told by the murals that adorn the walls of your headquarters, installed years ago to illustrate the power of law to improve our lives.

Now I haven't seen it yet myself, but I'm told that one of these murals, painted back in the 1930s, depicts black children and white children attending school together, sitting side by side in the same classroom. This was years before *Brown* versus *Board of Education*, at a time when Washington, DC, was still a segregated city.

It is, to this day, a moving reminder that sometimes law lags behind justice, and it is up to us to bridge that distance. That's been the work of Eric Holder's life and so many of yours. I thank you for answering the call to serve this Nation, and I look forward to working with you

in the months and years ahead to meet the urgent challenges of our time.

So thank you. God bless you. Keep up the great work, and let's install our outstanding Attorney General.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:23 a.m. in the Lisner Auditorium at George Washington University. In his remarks, he referred to Steven Knapp, president, George Washington University; District of Columbia Superior Court Judge Robert I. Richter; and Miriam Holder, mother, and William Holder, brother, of Attorney General Holder. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Attorney General Holder.

The President's Weekly Address
March 28, 2009

Even as we face an economic crisis which demands our constant focus, forces of nature can also intervene in ways that create other crises to which we must respond, and respond urgently. For the people of North and South Dakota and Minnesota who live along rivers spilling over their banks, this is one such moment. Rivers and streams throughout the region have flooded or are at risk of flooding. The cities of Fargo and neighboring Moorhead are vulnerable as the waters of the Red River have risen. Thousands of homes and businesses are threatened.

That's why, on Tuesday, I granted a major disaster declaration request for the State of North Dakota and ordered Federal support into the region to help State and local officials respond to the flooding. This was followed by an emergency declaration for the State of Minnesota. And we are also keeping close watch on the situation in South Dakota as it develops.

The Department of Homeland Security and the Federal Emergency Management Agency continue to coordinate the Federal response. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano is helping to oversee Federal efforts, and she remains in close contact with State officials. Acting FEMA Administrator Nancy Ward has been in the region since yesterday to meet with folks on the ground and survey the area herself.

In addition, The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is assisting in the emergency construction of levees. The Coast Guard is aiding in search and rescue efforts, while the Department of Defense is helping to move people and supplies. Members of the National Guard have been activated and are on the scene as well. Hospitals and nursing homes in the area are being evacuated and residents in poor health or with special needs are being transported to higher ground. Teams from the Department of Health and Human Services are aiding in this work. And the Red Cross is in place to provide shelter and supplies for folks in need.

It is also important for residents in these States to remain vigilant in monitoring reports on flood crests and to follow instructions from their State and local leaders in the event that evacuations become necessary.

My administration is working closely with Governors John Hoeven, Mike Rounds, and Tim Pawlenty, and I've been meeting with Senators Byron Dorgan, Kent Conrad, and Amy Klobuchar, as well as Congressmen Earl Pomeroy and Collin Peterson, to pledge my support. I'll continue to monitor the situation carefully. We will do what must be done to help in concert with State and local agencies and nonprofit organizations and volunteers who are doing so much to aid the response effort. For at moments like these, we're reminded of the power of nature to disrupt lives and endanger communities, but we are also reminded of the power of individuals to make a difference.

In the Fargodome, thousands of people gathered not to watch a football game or a rodeo, but to fill sandbags. Volunteers filled 2.5 million of them in just 5 days, working against the clock, day and night, with tired arms and aching backs. Others braved freezing

temperatures, gusting winds, and falling snow to build levees along the river's banks to help protect against waters that have exceeded record levels.

College students have traveled by the busload from nearby campuses to lend a hand during their spring breaks. Students from local high schools asked if they could take time to participate. Young people have turned social networks into community networks, coordinating with one another online to figure out how best to help.

In the face of an incredible challenge, the people of these communities have rallied in support of one another. And their service isn't just inspirational, it's integral to our response. It's also a reminder of what we can achieve when Americans come together to serve their communities. All across the Nation, there are men, women, and young people who have answered that call, and millions of other who would like to. Whether it's helping to reduce the energy we use, cleaning up a neighborhood park, tutoring in a local school, or volunteering in countless other ways, individual citizens can make a big difference.

And that's why I'm so happy that legislation passed the Senate this week and the House last week to provide more opportunities for Americans to serve their communities and the country. The bipartisan Senate bill was sponsored by Senator Orrin Hatch and Senator Ted Kennedy, leaders who embody the spirit of public service, and I am looking forward to signing this important measure into law.

In facing sudden crises or more stubborn challenges, the truth is we are all in this together, as neighbors and fellow citizens. That is what brought so many to help North Dakota and Minnesota and other areas affected by this flooding. That's what draws people to volunteer in so many ways, serving our country here and on distant shores. Our thanks go out to them today, and to all who are working day and night to deal with the disaster. We send them our thoughts, our prayers, and our continued assistance in this difficult time.

Thank you.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5 p.m. on March 27 in the Blue Room at the White House for broadcast on March 28. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 27 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on March 28. In his address, the President referred to Gov. John H. Hoeven III of North Dakota; Gov. M. Michael Rounds of South Dakota; and Gov. Timothy J. Pawlenty of Minnesota.

Remarks on the United States Automobile Industry
March 30, 2009

Good morning, everybody. One of the challenges we've confronted from the beginning of this administration is what to do with the state of the struggling auto industry. In recent months, my Auto Task Force has been reviewing requests by General Motors and Chrysler for additional Government assistance, as well as plans developed by each of these companies to restructure, to modernize, and to make themselves more competitive. Our evaluation is now complete. But before I lay out what needs to be done going forward, I want to say a few words about where we are and what led us to this point.

It will come as no surprise that some Americans who have suffered most during this recession have been those in the auto industry and those working for companies that support it. Over the past year, our auto industry has shed over 400,000 jobs, not only at plants that produce cars, but at the businesses that produce the parts that go into them and the dealers that sell and repair them. More than 1 in 10 Michigan residents is out of work, the most of any State. And towns and cities across the great Midwest have watched unemployment climb higher than it's been in decades.

The pain being felt in places that rely on our auto industry is not the fault of our workers; they labor tirelessly and desperately want to see their companies succeed. It's not the fault of all the families and communities that supported

manufacturing plants throughout the generations. Rather, it's a failure of leadership—from Washington to Detroit—that led our auto companies to this point.

Year after year, decade after decade, we've seen problems papered over and tough choices kicked down the road, even as foreign competitors outpaced us. Well, we've reached the end of that road. And we as a nation cannot afford to shirk responsibility any longer. Now is the time to confront our problems head on and do what's necessary to solve them.

We cannot, and must not, and we will not let our auto industry simply vanish. This industry is like no other; it's an emblem of the American spirit, a once and future symbol of America's success. It's what helped build the middle class and sustained it throughout the 20th century. It's a source of deep pride for the generations of American workers whose hard work and imagination led to some of the finest cars the world has ever known. It's a pillar of our economy that has held up the dreams of millions of our people. And we cannot continue to excuse poor decisions. We cannot make the survival of our auto industry dependent on an unending flow of taxpayer dollars. These companies and this industry must ultimately stand on their own, not as wards of the State.

And that's why the Federal Government provided General Motors and Chrysler with emergency loans to prevent their sudden collapse at the end of last year, only on the condition that they would develop plans to restructure. In keeping with that agreement, each company has submitted a plan to restructure. But after careful analysis, we've determined that neither goes far enough to warrant the substantial new investments that these companies are requesting.

And so today I'm announcing that my administration will offer GM and Chrysler a limited additional period of time to work with creditors, unions, and other stakeholders to fundamentally restructure in a way that would justify an investment of additional taxpayer dollars. During this period they must produce plans that would give the American people confidence in their long-term prospects for success.

Now, what we're asking for is difficult. It will require hard choices by companies. It will require unions and workers who have already made extraordinarily painful concessions to do more. It'll require creditors to recognize that they can't hold out for the prospect of endless Government bailouts. It'll have to—it will require efforts from a whole host of other stakeholders, including dealers and suppliers. Only then can we ask American taxpayers who have already put up so much of their hard-earned money to once more invest in a revitalized auto industry.

But I'm confident that if each are willing to do their part, if all of us are doing our part, then this restructuring, as painful as it will be in the short term, will mark not an end, but a new beginning for a great American industry, an auto industry that is once more out-competing the world, a 21st century auto industry that is creating new jobs, unleashing new prosperity, and manufacturing the fuel-efficient cars and trucks that will carry us towards an energy-independent future. I am absolutely committed to working with Congress and the auto companies to meet one goal: The United States of America will lead the world in building the next generation of clean cars.

And no one can deny that our auto industry has made meaningful progress in recent years, and this doesn't get talked about often enough. Some of the cars made by American workers right now are outperforming the best cars made abroad. In 2008, the North American car of the year was a GM. This year Buick tied for first place as the most reliable car in the world. Our companies are investing in breakthrough technologies that hold the promise of new vehicles that will help America end its addiction to foreign oil.

But our auto industry is not moving in the right direction fast enough to succeed in a very tough environment. So let me discuss what measures need to be taken by each of the auto companies requesting taxpayer assistance, and I'll start with General Motors.

GM has made a good-faith effort to restructure over the past several months, but

the plan that they've put forward is, in its current form, not strong enough. However, after broad consultation with a range of industry experts and financial advisers, I'm absolutely confident that GM can rise again, providing that it undergoes a fundamental restructuring. As an initial step, GM is announcing today that Rick Wagoner is stepping aside as chairman and CEO. This is not meant as a condemnation of Mr. Wagoner, who's devoted his life to this company and has had a distinguished career; rather, it's a recognition that it will take new vision and new direction to create the GM of the future.

In this context, my administration will offer General Motors adequate working capital over the next 60 days. And during this time, my team will be working closely with GM to produce a better business plan. They must ask themselves: Have they consolidated enough unprofitable brands? Have they cleaned up their balance sheets, or are they still saddled with so much debt that they can't make future investments? Above all, have they created a credible model for how not only to survive, but to succeed in this competitive global market?

Let me be clear: The United States Government has no interest in running GM; we have no intention of running GM. What we are interested in is giving GM an opportunity to finally make those much-needed changes that will let them emerge from this crisis a stronger and more competitive company.

The situation at Chrysler is more challenging. It's with deep reluctance but also a clear-eyed recognition of the facts that we've determined, after careful review, that Chrysler needs a partner to remain viable. Recently, Chrysler reached out and found what could be a potential partner, the international car company Fiat, where the current management team has executed an impressive turnaround. Fiat is prepared to transfer its cutting-edge technology to Chrysler and, after working closely with my team, has committed to building new fuel-efficient cars and engines right here in the United States. We've also secured an agreement that will ensure that Chrysler repays taxpayers for any new investments that are made before Fiat is allowed to take a majority ownership stake in Chrysler.

Still, such a deal would require an additional investment of taxpayer dollars, and there are a number of hurdles that must be overcome to make it work. I'm committed to doing all I can to see if a deal can be struck in a way that upholds the interests of American taxpayers. And that's why we'll give Chrysler and Fiat 30 days to overcome these hurdles and reach a final agreement, and we will provide Chrysler with adequate capital to continue operating during that time. If they are able to come to a sound agreement that protects American taxpayers, we will consider lending up to $6 billion to help their plan succeed. But if they and their stakeholders are unable to reach such an agreement, and in the absence of any other viable partnership, we will not be able to justify investing additional tax dollars to keep Chrysler in business.

Now, while Chrysler and GM are very different companies with very different paths forward, both need a fresh start to implement the restructuring plan they develop. That may mean using our bankruptcy code as a mechanism to help them restructure quickly and emerge stronger. Now, I want everybody to be clear about this. I know that when people hear the word "bankruptcy" it can be unsettling, so let me explain exactly what I mean. What I'm talking about is using our existing legal structure as a tool that, with the backing of the U.S. Government, can make it easier for General Motors and Chrysler to quickly clear away old debts that are weighing them down so that they can get back on their feet and onto a path to success, a tool that we can use even as workers staying on the job building cars that are being sold.

What I'm not talking about is a process where a company is simply broken up, sold off, and no longer exists; we're not talking about that. And what I'm not talking about is a company that's stuck in court for years, unable to get out.

So it's my hope that the steps I'm announcing today will have a salutary effect, will go a long way forward towards answering many of the questions that people have about the future of GM and Chrysler. But just in case there's still

nagging doubts, let me say it as plainly as I can: If you buy a car from Chrysler or General Motors, you will be able to get your car serviced and repaired, just like always. Your warranty will be safe. In fact, it will be safer than it's ever been, because starting today, the United States Government will stand behind your warranty.

But we must also recognize that the difficulties facing this industry are due in no small part to the weaknesses in our economy as a whole. And therefore, to support demand for auto sales during this period, I'm directing my team to take several steps.

First, we will ensure that Recovery Act funds to purchase Government cars get out as quickly as possible and work through the budget process to accelerate other Federal fleet purchases as well.

Second, we'll accelerate our efforts through the Treasury Department's Consumer and Business Lending Initiative. And we are working intensively with the auto finance companies to increase the flow of credit to both consumers and dealers.

Third, the IRS is launching a campaign to alert consumers of a new tax benefit for auto purchases made between February 16th and the end of this year. If you buy a car anytime this year, you may be able to deduct the cost of any sales and excise taxes. And this provision could save families hundreds of dollars and lead to as many as 100,000 new car sales.

Finally, several Members of Congress have proposed an even more ambitious incentive program to increase car sales while modernizing our auto fleet. And such fleet modernization programs, which provide a generous credit to consumers who turn in old, less fuel-efficient cars and purchase cleaner cars, have been successful in boosting auto sales in a number of European countries. I want to work with Congress to identify parts of the Recovery Act that could be trimmed to fund such a program and make it retroactive starting today.

Now, let there be no doubt, it will take an unprecedented effort on all our parts—from the Halls of Congress to the boardroom, from the union hall to the factory floor—to see the auto industry through these difficult times. And I want every American to know that the path I'm laying out today is our best chance to make sure that the cars of the future are built where they've always been built—in Detroit and across the Midwest—to make America's auto industry in the 21st century what it was in the 20th century, unsurpassed around the world. The path has been chosen after consulting with other governments that are facing this crisis. We've worked closely with the Government of Canada on GM and Chrysler, as both those companies have extensive operations there. The Canadian Government has indicated its support for our approach and will be announcing their specific commitments later today.

While the steps I'm taking will have an impact on all Americans, some of our fellow citizens will be affected more than others. So I'd like to speak directly to all those men and women who work in the auto industry or live in countless communities that depend on it. Many of you have been going through tough times for longer than you care to remember. And I won't pretend that the tough times are over. I can't promise you there isn't more difficulty to come.

But what I can promise you is this: I will fight for you. You're the reason I'm here today. I got my start fighting for working families in the shadows of a shuttered steel plant. I wake up every single day asking myself what can I do to give you and working people all across this country a fair shot at the American Dream.

When a community is struck by a natural disaster, the Nation responds to put it back on its feet. While the storm that has hit our auto towns is not a tornado or a hurricane, the damage is clear, and we must likewise respond. And that's why today I'm designating a new Director of Recovery for Auto Communities and Workers to cut through the redtape and ensure that the full resources of our Federal Government are leveraged to assist the workers, communities, and regions that rely on our auto industry. Edward Montgomery, a former Deputy Labor Secretary, has agreed to serve in this role.

And together with Labor Secretary Solis and my Auto Task Force, Ed will help provide support to auto workers and their families, and open up opportunity to manufacturing communities in Michigan and Ohio and Indiana and every other State that relies on the auto industry.

They will have a strong advocate in Ed. He will direct a comprehensive effort that will help lift up the hardest hit areas by using the unprecedented levels of funding available in our Recovery Act and throughout our Government to create new manufacturing jobs and new businesses where they're needed most in your communities. And he will also lead an effort to identify new initiatives we may need to help support your communities going forward.

These efforts, as essential as they are, are not going to make everything better overnight. There are jobs that won't be saved; there are plants that may not reopen. There's little I can say that can subdue the anger or ease the frustration of all whose livelihoods hang in the balance because of failures that weren't theirs.

But there's something I want everybody to remember: Remember that it is precisely in times like these, in moments of trial and moments of hardship, that Americans rediscover the ingenuity and resilience that makes us who we are; that made the auto industry what it once was and what it will be again; that sent those first mass-produced cars rolling off the assembly lines; that built an arsenal of democracy that propelled America to victory in the Second World War; and that powered our economic prowess in the first American century.

Because I know that if we can tap into that same ingenuity and resilience right now, if we can carry one another through this difficult time and do what must be done, then we will look back and say that this was the moment when the American auto industry shed its old ways, marched into the future, remade itself, and once more became an engine of opportunity and prosperity not only in Detroit, not only in our Midwest, but all across America.

I'm confident we can make that happen, but we've got a lot of work to do. Thank you. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:07 a.m. in the Grand Foyer at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Edward B. Montgomery, dean, College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, University of Maryland.

Remarks on Signing the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009
March 30, 2009

Well, thank you so much, Ken, for that extraordinary introduction and for the work that you and your team are undertaking at the Department of the Interior. We're going to add a little bit to your plate today as a consequence of this extraordinary piece of legislation.

I want to thank all the Members of the Legislature who helped to craft this. Many of them are on the stage here today. Obviously, I've got to single out the Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, for her extraordinary leadership, but also our leader in the Senate, Harry Reid, who worked so diligently on this bill and made sure that it got done. And so please give all of these legislators a big round of applause.

If you'll indulge me, there are just a couple other people I want to acknowledge: Nancy Sutley, who is the Chair of our Council on Environmental Quality, who is here. Where's Nancy? There she is, right in front. Jane Lubchenco, who is the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration—please, Jane. A couple of great friends from Indian nation: President Joe Shirley of Navajo Nation, who is here—go ahead, Joe, stand up; and Tribal Chairman Robert Bear, of the Duck Valley Shoshone-Paiute Tribes. Thank you so much.

It is fitting that we meet on a day like this. Winter's hardships are slowly giving way to spring and our thoughts naturally tend to turn to the outdoors. We emerge from the shelter offered by home and work and we look around, and we're reminded that the most valuable things in this life are those things that we already possess.

As Americans, we possess few blessings greater than the vast and varied landscapes that stretch the breadth of our continent. Our lands have always provided great bounty: food and shelter for the first Americans—for settlers and pioneers, the raw materials that grew our industry, the energy that powers our economy.

What these gifts require in return is our wise and responsible stewardship. As our greatest conservationist President, Teddy Roosevelt, put it almost a century ago, "I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use the natural resources of our land; but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or to rob, by wasteful use, the generations that come after us." That's the spirit behind the bipartisan legislation I'm signing today, legislation among the most important in decades to protect, preserve, and pass down our Nation's most treasured landscapes to future generations.

Many Senators and Congressmen here deserve enormous credit for making this bill possible. I'm grateful to all their hard work. As I mentioned before, Harry Reid made this a top priority. He made sure this was the first bill the Senate passed this year. This day would not be possible without his tireless dedication to protecting our treasured lands.

This legislation—just to give you a sense of the scope—this legislation guarantees that we will not take our forests, rivers, oceans, national parks, monuments, and wilderness areas for granted; but rather we will set them aside and guard their sanctity for everyone to share. That's something all Americans can support. And that's why so much of this legislation, some of it decades in the making, has the backing of Americans from every walk of life and corner of this country. Ranchers and fishermen, small-business owners, environmentalists, conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats on the local, State, and Federal levels, all united around the idea that there should be places that we must preserve; all doing the hard work of seeking common ground to protect the parks and other places that we cherish.

We're talking about places like Colorado, where this bill will realize a vision 35 years in the making by protecting the wild back country of Rocky Mountain National Park, which attracts 3 million visitors a year. Folks in communities around this park know they don't have to choose between economic and environmental concerns; the tourism that drives their local economy depends on good stewardship of their local environment. And year after year, these communities have worked together with Members of Congress in an attempt to ensure that Rocky Mountain National Park will forever remain as breathtaking as it is today.

And that is what this bill does from coast to coast. It protects treasured places from the Appalachians of Virginia and West Virginia to Michigan's Upper Peninsula; from the canyons of Idaho to the sandstone cliffs of Utah; from the Sierra Nevadas in California to the Badlands of Oregon.

It designates more than 2 million acres across nine States as wilderness, almost as much as was designated over the past 8 years combined. It creates thousands of miles of new scenic, historic, and recreational trails, cares for our historic battlefields, strengthens our National Park System. It safeguards more than 1,000 miles of our rivers, protects watersheds and cleans up polluted groundwater, defends our oceans and Great Lakes, and will revitalize our fisheries, returning fish to rivers that have not seen them in decades.

And it wisely faces our future challenges with regard to water. This bill assesses how growth and climate change will affect our access to water resources, especially in the West and Southwest, and it includes solutions to complex and long-simmering water disputes. It's hard to overstate the real and measurable impact this will have on people's lives, people like Frank Chee Willetto, a Navajo code talker in World War II, who's joined us today. And because of this legislation, Frank, along with 80,000 others in the Navajo Nation, will have access to clean running water for the very first time. That's something worth applauding. [*Applause*] Thank you for your service.

When coupled with the Recovery Act, which makes an historic $3 billion investment creating jobs that will restore and protect our landscapes and our ecosystems, preserve our national monuments, retrofit our facilities for energy efficiency and renewable energy—taken together, today's legislation takes another step toward fulfilling Teddy Roosevelt's vision for this land that we love. It's a vision that sees America's great wilderness as a place where what was, and what is, and what will be—all are the same; a place where memories are lived and relived; a place where Americans both young and young at heart can freely experience the spirit of adventure that has always been at the heart of the rugged character of America.

Now, the legislation I'm signing today also makes progress on another front for which many Americans have long waited. The Christopher and Dana Reeve's Paralysis Act is the first piece of comprehensive legislation specifically aimed at addressing the challenges faced by Americans living with paralysis. Many folks and organizations from across the disability community worked hard to get this bill passed, and we are grateful to each of you for bringing us that much closer to providing all Americans with disabilities a full, fair, and equal opportunity to achieve the American Dream.

This act creates new coordinated research activities through the National Institutes of Health that will connect the best minds and best practices from the best labs in the country, and focus their endeavors through collaborative scientific research into the cure for paralysis, saving effort, money, and most importantly, time. It promotes enhanced rehabilitation services for paralyzed Americans, helping develop better equipment and technology that will allow them to live full and independent lives free from unnecessary barriers. And it will work to improve the quality of life for all those who live with paralysis, no matter what the cause.

That's the mission of the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation. In the lobby of their facility in New Jersey sits Christopher's empty wheelchair. And his son, Matthew Reeve, was once asked if the sight of it ever saddened him, and he replied no. He said, "Empty chairs, that was Dad's goal," he said. "We hope there will be many more of them." Matthew is here with us today. And the legislation I'm about to sign makes solid progress toward the realization of that hope and the promise of a brighter future.

All in all, this legislation is that rare end product of what happens when Americans of all parties and places come together in common purpose to consider something more than the politics of the moment. It's the very idea at the heart of this country: that each generation has a responsibility to secure this Nation's promise for the next. And by signing this bill into law, that's what we're doing today.

So—is Matthew here, by the way? Matthew, come on up. He looks like his dad, doesn't he? Thank you. All right. Let's sign this bill.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:11 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of the Interior Kenneth L. Salazar, who introduced the President. H.R. 146, approved March 30, was assigned Public Law No. 111–11.

Statement on Signing the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009
March 30, 2009

Today I have signed into law H.R. 146, the "Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009." This landmark bill will protect millions of acres of Federal land as wilderness, protect more than 1,000 miles of rivers through the National Wild and Scenic River System, and designate thousands of miles of trails for the National Trails System. It also will authorize the 26 million-acre National Landscape Conservation System within the Department of the Interior.

Among other provisions, H.R. 146 designates three new units in our National Park System, enlarges the boundaries of several existing parks, and designates a number of National Heritage Areas. It creates a new national monument—the Prehistoric Trackways National

Monument—and four new national conservation areas, and establishes the Wyoming Range Withdrawal Area. It establishes a collaborative landscape-scale restoration program with a goal of reducing the risk of wildfire and authorizes programs to study and research the effects of climate change on natural resources and other research-related activities.

Treasured places from coast to coast will benefit from H.R. 146, including Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore in Michigan; Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia; Oregon's Mount Hood; Idaho's Owyhee Canyons; the Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado; Zion National Park in Utah; remarkable landscapes in the Sierra Nevada Mountains of California; and wilderness-quality National Forest lands in Virginia and public lands in New Mexico.

This bipartisan bill has been many years in the making, and is one of the most important pieces of natural resource legislation in decades. This legislation also makes progress for which millions of Americans have long waited on another front. The Christopher and Dana Reeve Paralysis Act is the first piece of comprehensive legislation aimed at improving the lives of Americans living with paralysis. It creates new coordinated research activities through the National Institutes of Health that will connect the best minds and best practices from the best labs across the country, and focus their efforts through collaborative scientific research into a cure for paralysis, saving effort, money, and, most importantly, time. It will promote enhanced rehabilitation services for paralyzed Americans, helping develop better equipment and technology that allows them to live full and independent lives free from unnecessary barriers. This legislation will work to improve the quality of life for all those who live with paralysis, no matter the cause.

Section 8203 of the Act provides that the Secretary of the Interior shall appoint certain members of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission "based on recommendations from each member of the House of Representatives, the district of which encompasses the Corridor." Because it would be an impermissible restriction on the appointment power to condition the Secretary's appointments on the recommendations of members of the House, I will construe these provisions to require the Secretary to consider such congressional recommendations, but not to be bound by them in making appointments to the Commission.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
March 30, 2009.

NOTE: H.R. 146, approved March 30, was assigned Public Law No. 111–11.

Remarks Following a Meeting With United States Special Envoy to Sudan Major General J. Scott Gration
March 30, 2009

The President. Hello, everybody. Obviously on a busy news day, I wanted us to make sure that we weren't losing sight of something that has been an ongoing international crisis, and that is the situation in Darfur.

As many of you know, there has been a longstanding humanitarian crisis there, prompted by displacement and genocide that has been taking place. There have been a series of negotiations around resolving this crisis in Sudan. It has not gotten resolved, and it is now worsening.

And so I wanted to publicly affirm the importance of General Scott Gration, who has been appointed as Special Envoy to Sudan, to work on a whole host of issues that I think are of importance to the international community and should touch the conscience of all of us.

General Gration is one of my top national security advisers. He's somebody who I've

known for a long time. We've traveled together in Africa. He was a close associate during the campaign. And so I can't think of somebody who is better equipped to travel to Africa, the continent where he grew up, and communicate to Sudan a couple of important points. Number one, we have an immediate crisis prompted by the Khartoum Government's expulsion of nongovernmental organizations that are providing aid to displaced persons inside of Sudan. And we have to figure out a mechanism to get those NGOs back in place, to reverse that decision, or to find some mechanism whereby we avert a enormous humanitarian crisis.

Even as we're dealing with that immediate issue, we can't take our eyes off the longstanding conflicts in Sudan that have resulted in all these persons being displaced. And that means that General Gration's task is going to be to see if we can reinvigorate the north-south agreement, make sure that it is implemented in an effective way, and that we are also exploring a mechanism whereby we can get talks between rebels and the Khartoum Government that could help, once and for all, resolve the Darfur situation.

This is going to be a very difficult task; it will be a time-consuming task. We don't expect any solutions overnight to the longstanding problems there. Fortunately, what's happened in Darfur has touched so many people around the world, and we have seen such an extraordinary mobilization of advocates, many of who are sitting at this table—we've got bipartisan interest on the part of Members of Congress around this issue—that I actually think that America can speak effectively with one voice and bring the moral and other elements of our stature to bear in trying to deal with this situation.

And I can't think of a person who's better than Scott Gration to represent us in this critical task, and I am sending him off with my full confidence. He will be speaking for the administration, and he will be coming back to report to me very shortly about what he's found there and additional steps that we can take to deal with this situation.

So, thank you, Scott, for the great work.

Maj. Gen. Gration. Thank you, sir.

The President. Good. All right, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:24 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Remarks at a Reception Honoring Representative David R. Obey
March 30, 2009

The President. Hello, everybody. Well, I wanted to come by—and don't worry, I'm not singing. [*Laughter*] That's a pretty funny one, isn't it? [*Laughter*]

Audience member. The harmonica!

The President. I'm not playing the harmonica, either. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Bowling!

The President. I'm not bowling. [*Laughter*]

I am here to do one, simple thing, and that is to publicly thank David Obey for his extraordinary service to our country. He has been there through thick and through thin, in the majority and the minority. He has consistently held to his values. He has been a passionate advocate for working men and women and making sure that everybody has got a fair shot in our society.

He has been guided by his conscience. He has been directed by a fierce intelligence and great courage. And so, you know, many of us have him to thank for the path that he has created as we entered into politics. Because of him, this is a better place, this country of ours. And he is continuing to do outstanding work each and every day, including partnering with me to help get a whole bunch of stuff done that needs to get done on behalf of the American people.

So, David, thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:43 p.m. at the Washington Court Hotel. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement Commemorating the Birthday of Cesar Chavez
March 31, 2009

Today, on what would have been his 82d birthday, Cesar Chavez's legacy as an educator, environmentalist, and as a civil rights leader who struggled for fair treatment and fair wages for America's workers is important for every American to remember.

Having begun as a farm worker, Cesar Chavez eventually cofounded the United Farm Workers and struggled to provide hundreds of thousands of people with better working conditions and the chance to live a better life. The cause of fair treatment and fair wages for America's workers lives on today through the work of countless others.

Chavez's rallying cry, "*Si se puede*"—"Yes we can," was more than a slogan, it was an expression of hope and a rejection of those who said farm workers could not organize and could not take on the growers. Through his courage, Cesar Chavez taught us that a single voice could change our country, and that together, we could make America a stronger, more just, and more prosperous nation.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Legislation to Promote Voluntarism
March 31, 2009

I congratulate the House on passing the bipartisan "Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act." This is legislation that will usher in a new era of service in America, and I look forward to signing it into law when I return to Washington.

Because of this legislation, millions of Americans at all stages of their lives will have new opportunities to serve their country: from improving service learning in schools to creating an army of 250,000 Corps members a year dedicated to addressing our Nation's toughest problems; from connecting working Americans to a variety of part-time service opportunities to better utilizing the skills and experience of our retirees and baby boomers. This legislation will help tap the genius of our faith-based and community organizations, and it will find the most innovative ideas for addressing our common challenges and helping those ideas grow.

But while our Government can provide every opportunity imaginable for us to serve our communities, now it is up to each of us to seize those opportunities. I call on all Americans to stand up and do what they can to serve their communities, shape our history, and enrich both their own lives and the lives of others across this country.

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the Untied Kingdom in London, England
April 1, 2009

Prime Minister Brown. The whole of the United Kingdom welcomes President Obama and the First Lady on your first official visit to our country. President Obama, you have given renewed hope not only to the citizens of the United States of America, but to all citizens in all part of the world. And I want to thank you for your leadership, your vision, and your courage, which you've already shown in your Presidency, and congratulate you on the dynamism, the energy, and indeed, the achievements that you have been responsible for.

Your first 70 days in office have changed America, and you've changed America's

relationship with the world. So I thank you for coming to our country, and I hope you will enjoy your visit with us.

Today we are renewing our special relationship for new times. Ours is not an alliance of convenience, it is a partnership of purpose. It's a partnership that at times of challenge is resilient and at times of change is constant.

President Obama and I are agreed about the significance of this week's G–20 meeting, that the world is coming together to act in the face of unprecedented global financial times. Our first duty is to those who are suffering most, the people anxious about their mortgages, their jobs, and their family's future. For them, the pain of recession is all too real. But let us not forget that in 1929, when the Wall Street crash happened and led to recession, it was not until 1945 that the world came together to reshape the world economy. Then it took more than 15 years.

Today, within months of this financial crisis, we are coming together to solve the common problems we face, we are cooperating to shorten the recession, and we are working together to protect and save jobs. The truth is that today's global problems require global solutions. And at this week's summit, when leaders representing 85 percent of the world's economy are gathering together, this summit cannot simply agree to the lowest common denominator. We must stand united in our determination to do whatever is necessary.

This is an unprecedented financial crisis. People have lost their homes, their jobs, and in some cases, their hope. And President Obama and I are agreed today that the actions we take are global solutions requiring for global problems.

There are really five tests for the G–20 summit, five tests for the world, tests that if met will create a new consensus for the world. The speed and scale of global economic change has overwhelmed the national systems of rules and regulations. So our first test is to agree tougher and more transparent supervision of banks, hedge funds, and what is known as the global shadow banking system. We are both agreed there will be no sustainable recovery until the banks are cleaned up and a new regulatory system is put in place. The second test is to commit to taking the action necessary to bring about a resumption of growth, push back against the global recession, and support families and businesses. The third test is to ensure, by international economic cooperation and by strengthening our international economic institutions, we support growth in emerging markets and developing countries. The fourth test is to reject protectionism and kick-start global trade, and I suggest that an absolute minimum of $100 billion of trade finance that is so desperately needed. Fifth, we have an obligation to help the poorest, those most vulnerable, but least able to respond to the crisis, by meeting our Millennium Development Goals and keeping our pledges on aid.

Both the United Kingdom and the United States are also embarked on a transition to becoming low-carbon economies, because the President and I share the conviction that green energy technologies will be the major driver of our future economic growth, and we can create millions of green-collar jobs in the world for the future.

Now, we have some tough negotiations ahead. It will not be easy. But I know from my talks this week and from my discussions with President Obama today, that the world does want to come together, that Britain and America working together can help make this consensus not just something that is agreed on paper, but which truly delivers for people everywhere who are worried about their jobs and their hopes and their family budgets.

Today we, the G–20 leaders, will begin our discussions. Tomorrow we must make decisions. And that is what we will do.

We've also discussed how we rebuild Afghanistan by complementing our military action with defense, diplomacy, and development, putting new resources into civilian support for the Afghan reconstruction. The President and I also discussed our hopes that Iran will make the right choice and take advantage of the international community's willingness to negotiate and how we will renew our efforts to deliver security and peace for both the Palestinians and Israel.

Mr. President, I'm honored to be working with you so closely. We share a personal

friendship. I believe we can continue to work together for the common good. I repeat: The whole of the United Kingdom is delighted and privileged that you're with us today. Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you so much, Gordon.

Good morning. I am very pleased to be in London, especially with weather of the sort we're seeing today. And I want to thank Prime Minister Brown for hosting us, for his wife taking Michelle on a tour of some wonderful projects around the city, for his leadership throughout this challenge. I have to say, it's not just Gordon and Sarah that have been very hospitable, I had a chance to see their two sons, and we talked about dinosaurs a little bit in between discussions of Afghanistan and Iran. [*Laughter*] So we've had a wonderful time.

And you're to be congratulated because you have shown extraordinary energy and leadership and initiative in laying the groundwork for this summit. All of us owe Prime Minister Brown an extraordinary debt of gratitude for his preparations in what I believe will be a historic and essential meeting of the G–20 nations.

Prime Minister Brown and I had a productive discussion this morning. Both of us greatly value the special relationship between our nations. The United States and the United Kingdom have stood together through thick and thin, through war and peace, through hard times and prosperity, and we've always emerged stronger by standing together. So I'm pleased that my first meeting overseas as President is with Gordon Brown, just as I was pleased to host him in Washington shortly after taking office. And I know that we both believe that the relationship between our two countries is more than just an alliance of interests; it's a kinship of ideals, and it must be constantly renewed.

In our meeting this morning we covered a complex and wide-ranging agenda. It begins, of course, with the global economy. All of us here in London have the responsibility to act with a sense of urgency, and I think that what Prime Minister Brown spoke about, the human dimensions of this crisis—people losing their homes, losing their businesses that they've worked so hard for, losing their health care in the United States, people around the world who were already desperate before the crisis and may find themselves even more desperate afterwards—that's what our agenda has to begin with, and that's where it will end.

All of us here in London have the responsibility to act with a sense of urgency, and every nation that will be participating has been affected by a crisis that has cost us so much in terms of jobs, savings, and the economic security of our citizens. So make no mistake, we are facing the most severe economic crisis since World War II, and the global economy is now so fundamentally interconnected that we can only meet this challenge together. We can't create jobs at home if we're not doing our part to support strong and stable markets around the world.

The United States is committed, working alongside the United Kingdom, to doing whatever it takes to stimulate growth and demand and to ensure that a crisis like this never happens again. At home, we're moving forward aggressively on both recovery and reform. We've taken unprecedented action to create jobs and restore the flow of credit. And we've proposed a clear set of tough, new 21st century rules of the road for all of our financial institutions. We are lifting ourselves out of this crisis and putting an end to the abuses that got us here.

I know that the G–20 nations are appropriately pursuing their own approaches, and as Gordon indicated, we're not going to agree on every point. I came here to put forward our ideas, but I also came here to listen, not to lecture. Having said that, we must not miss an opportunity to lead. To confront a crisis that knows no borders, we have a responsibility to coordinate our actions and to focus on common ground, not on our occasional differences. If we do, I believe we can make enormous progress. And that's why, in preparation for these meetings, I've reached out and consulted with many of the leaders who are here or will be arriving shortly.

History shows us that when nations fail to cooperate, when they turn away from one another, when they turn inward, the price for our people only grows. That's how the Great Depression deepened. That's a mistake that we cannot afford to repeat.

So in the days ahead, I believe we will move forward with a sense of common purpose. We have to do what's necessary to restore growth and to pursue the reforms that can stabilize our financial system well into the future. We have to reject protectionism and accelerate our efforts to support emerging markets. And we have to put in place a structure that can sustain our cooperation in the months and years ahead.

The Prime Minister and I also covered several other areas of challenge that are fundamental to our common security and prosperity. As he mentioned, we discussed my administration's review of strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan, a review that benefited greatly from the consultations with our allies.

The city of London, like the United States, was attacked by the Al Qaida terrorists who are still plotting in Pakistan, and we are committed to a focused effort to defeat them. And I want to repeat something that I said during our last visit together: I want to honor the British troops, and their families, who are serving alongside our own on behalf of our common security.

We also discussed the progress that was made yesterday at The Hague, where more than 70 nations gathered to discuss our mutual responsibilities to partner with the Afghan people so that we can deny Al Qaida a safe haven. And in the days ahead, we'll consult further with our NATO allies about training Afghan security forces, increasing our civilian support, and a regional approach that recognizes the connection between the future of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

And just a few other points, the Prime Minister and I share a common commitment to sustain diplomacy on behalf of a secure and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians, and Israel and the Arab world. And we're working together to responsibly end the war in Iraq by transitioning to Iraqi responsibility. We're both committed to diplomacy with Iran that offers the Islamic Republic the opportunity of a better future if it abandons its nuclear weapons ambitions.

And finally, we discussed two of the other long-term challenges that will define our times, which I will be focused on throughout my trip in Europe, the need for global action to confront climate change and a renewed effort on behalf of nuclear nonproliferation, which I will be discussing later today with President Medvedev.

Our immediate task, however, is the critical work of confronting the economic crisis. As I've said, we've passed through an era of profound irresponsibility; now we cannot afford half-measures, and we cannot go back to the kind of risk-taking that leads to bubbles that inevitably bust.

So we have a choice. We can shape our future, or let events shape it for us. And if we want to succeed, we can't fall back on the stale debates and old divides that won't move us forward. Every single nation who's here has a stake in the other. We won't solve all our problems in the next few days, but we can make real and unprecedented progress. We have an obligation to keep it—keep working at it until the burden on ordinary people is lifted, until we've achieved the kind of steady growth that creates jobs and advances prosperity for people everywhere. That's the responsibility we bear; that must be the legacy of our cooperation. And I'm extraordinarily grateful to Gordon for his friendship and his leadership in mobilizing at a time of such significant moment.

Prime Minister Brown. Thank you very much. I said to Barack I was going to introduce him to my friends in the British media.

Nick.

Global Economic Situation

Q. Prime Minister, thank you very much indeed. Nick Robinson, BBC News. A question for you both, if I may. The Prime Minister has repeatedly blamed the United States of America for causing this crisis. France and Germany blame both Britain and America for causing this crisis. Who is right? And isn't the debate about that at the heart of the debate about what to do now?

President Obama. I would say that if you look at the sources of this crisis, the United States certainly has some accounting to do with respect to a regulatory system that was inadequate to the massive changes that had taken place in the global financial system.

I think what is also true is that here in Great Britain, in continental Europe, around the world, we were seeing the same mismatch between the regulatory regimes that were in place and the highly integrated global capital markets that had emerged.

So at this point, I'm less interested in identifying blame than fixing the problem. And I think we've taken some very aggressive steps in the United States to do so, not just responding to the immediate crisis, ensuring that banks are adequately capitalized, dealing with the enormous drop-off in demand and the contraction that's been taking place, but more importantly over—for the long term, making sure that we've got a set of regulations that are up to the task.

And that includes a number that will be discussed at this summit. I think there's a lot of convergence between all the parties involved about the need, for example, to focus not on the legal form that a particular financial product takes or the institution that it emerges from, but rather what's the risk involved; what's the function of this product and how do we regulate that adequately; much more effective coordination between countries so that we can anticipate some of the risks that are involved; dealing with the problem of derivatives markets and making sure that we've set up systems that can reduce some of the risk there. So I actually think that there's enormous consensus that has emerged in terms of what we need to do now, and I'm a big believer in looking forward rather than backwards.

Prime Minister Brown. You know, I was in Brazil last week, and I think President Lula will forgive me for saying this, he said to me: "When I was leader of the trades unions, I blamed the Government; when I became leader of the opposition, I blamed the Government; when I became the Government, I blamed Europe and America." [*Laughter*]

And he recognizes, as we do, that this is a global problem. It's a global problem that requires a global solution. What essentially happened is that the speed and the pace and the scope of global financial changes, the mobility of capital around the world, overwhelmed system of national regulation. And if we don't accept that as the problem that we've got to solve, then we will not solve the problems this week.

This is a problem to build cross-border supervision, to actually deal with the rules globally that can govern the financial supervision of banks and markets and to root out the bad practices that have partly existed because of the scope by which—because of the speed by which financial markets moved and the scope that they had to cross national boundaries.

So we need global solutions to what is a global problem, and I think we will agree a number of measures, as President Obama said, that will clean up the global financial system.

President Obama. And just one last point I want to make, because it's relevant to this issue of responsibility versus blame. I had a professor when I was in law school who said some are to blame but all are responsible. And I think that's the best way for us to approach the problem that we have right now.

I do think that, across borders, there has been a tendency to believe that whatever the global capital markets were doing was ultimately beneficial. I am a big believer in global capital markets and their potential to provide capital to countries that might not otherwise be able to grow, the possibilities of increasing living standards in ways that we have not seen previously in world history. But what we have to understand is, is that that's going to require some sort of regulatory framework to make sure that it doesn't jump the rails. And that, I think, is something that we're going to be able to put together.

Jennifer Loven of AP [Associated Press]. Where's Jennifer? There you are.

U.S. Influence Abroad/Global Economic Stabilization

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, Mr. Prime Minister. Mr. President, you come here with several signs of fairly broad challenges to American economic leadership. There's the resistance to big, new stimulus spending; there's talk of a global—new global currency, talk of even stricter regulations than are on the table now. How do you answer that? And what do you say to the talk that there's a decline in the American model and American prominence?

And then to the Prime Minister, if I could. French President Sarkozy said he might walk out of the summit if the regulations that are on the table do not get more strict, say, on offshore tax havens and on risky financial products. Can you answer that?

President Obama. Well, I think if you pulled quotes from 10 years ago, 20 years ago, 30 years ago, from previous news reports, you might find similar contentions that America was on decline. And somehow it hasn't worked out that way, because I think that there is a vibrancy to our economic model, a durability to our political model, and a set of ideals that has sustained us through even the most difficult times.

Now, with respect to the current crisis, I think that there is no doubt that at a time when the world is fearful, that there is a strong tendency to look for somebody to blame. And I think that given our prominence in the world financial system, it's natural that questions are asked—some of them very legitimate—about how we have participated in global financial markets.

Having said that, I am absolutely confident that this meeting will reflect enormous consensus about the need to work in concert to deal with these problems. I think that the separation between the various parties involved has been vastly overstated. If you look at where there has been the biggest debate—and I think that the press has fastened on this as a ongoing narrative, this whole issue of fiscal stimulus. And the fact of the matter is, is that almost every country that's participating in this summit has engaged in fiscal stimulus. The ones that are perceived as being resistant to fiscal stimulus have done significant fiscal stimulus. There has not been a dispute about the need for Government to act in the face of a rapidly contracting set of markets and very high unemployment.

Now, there have been differences in terms of how should that stimulus be shaped. There have been arguments, for example, among some European countries that because they have more of a social safety net, that some of the countercyclical measures that we took—for example, unemployment insurance—were less necessary for them to take. But the truth is, is that that's just arguing at the margins. The core notion that Government has to take some steps to deal with a contracting global marketplace and that we should be promoting growth, that's not in dispute.

On the regulatory side, this notion that somehow there are those who are pushing for regulation and those who are resisting regulation is belied by the facts. Tim Geithner, who's sitting here today, went before Congress and proposed as aggressive a set of regulatory measures as any that have emerged among G–20 members. That was before we showed up.

And in conversations that Gordon and I had with our teams, I think there's great symmetry in our belief that even as we deal with the current crisis, we've got to make sure that we're preventing future crises like this from happening again.

On the topic of emerging markets and making sure that they have the finances that they need to weather the storm, poor countries are getting help, and they're not being lost in the shuffle, there is complete concurrence.

So I know that when you've got a bunch of heads of state talking, it's not visually that interesting—[*laughter*]—and it—you know, the communiques are written in sort of dry language, and so there's a great desire to inject some conflict and some drama into the occasion. But the truth of the matter is, is that I think there has been an extraordinary convergence, and I'm absolutely confident that the United States, as a peer of these other countries, will help to lead us through this very difficult time.

Prime Minister Brown. Let me also add that I'm confident that President Sarkozy will not

only be here for the first course of our dinner, but will still be sitting as we complete our dinner this evening.

And I think, as President Obama has said, look, never before has the world come together in this way to deal with an economic crisis. Any of the crises that we've seen since the Second World War, you have not had this level of international cooperation. And never before have the world come together with so many countries represented from so many different continents to address this crisis. So we have China, we have India, we have Argentina, Brazil, we have South Africa, we have Russia, as well as Europe and America and Japan.

And we are within a few hours, I think, of agreeing a global plan for economic recovery and reform. And I think the significance of this is that we're looking at every aspect. It is American leadership on the reshaping the financial system, on recapitalizing the banks, on restructuring the banking system that will inform our discussions on the future of the financial system. So I praise President Obama for the work that has been done within only a few days of coming into office.

But we will also be discussing how we can help the emerging markets and the industrializing countries, how they can be protected against the financial storm that is facing them. We will not forget that we have obligations to the poorest countries in the world as well. And so the significance of this is not just that everybody is coming together, but in all those different dimensions of the economic activity of the world, how we can restructure the financial system; how we can get growth back and create jobs in the world; how we can rebuild our financial institutions for the future; how we can help the poorest countries of the world; how we can move forward on low-carbon recovery. You're going to see action.

And of course it's difficult, of course it's complex; you have a large number of countries. But I'm very confident that people not only want to work together, but we agree a common global plan for recovery and reform.

Tom.

Global Economic Stabilization

Q. Tom Bradby, ITV News. Mr. President, I hear what you say, but you've committed a vast sum of your country's money to a huge fiscal stimulus, and we had the clear impression that you wanted other countries to come in behind you a bit more strongly. It appears that we've been told by the governor of the Bank of England we can't do more for the moment, and the French and the Germans won't. Are you disappointed by that? And are you actually still calling on other countries to go further?

President Obama. Well, as I said before, I think that there is broad recognition that in the midst of the worst crisis we've seen since the thirties that governments are going to have to act. And certainly, the United States does not intend to act alone, and we're not. Great Britain has taken serious steps. The European Union has taken serious steps. Australia, Canada, Japan, China have all initiated significant stimulus packages. And I think that our goal is simply to make certain that each country, taking into account its differences in economic circumstances as well as political culture, is doing what is necessary to promote economic growth.

The United States will do its share, but I think that one of the things that Gordon and I spoke about is the fact that in some ways the world has become accustomed to the United States being a voracious consumer market and the engine that drives a lot of economic growth worldwide. And I think that in the wake of this crisis, even as we're doing stimulus we have to take into account our own deficits. We're going to have to take into account a whole host of factors that can increase our savings rate and start dealing with our long-term fiscal position as well as our current account deficits.

Those are all issues that we have to deal with internally, which means that if there's going to be renewed growth, it can't just be the United States as the engine. Everybody is going to have to pick up the pace. And I think that there's a recognition, based on the conversations that I've had with leaders around the world, that that is important.

I should add, by the way, that to the extent that all countries are participating in promoting growth, that also strengthens the arguments that we can make in our respective countries about the importance of world trade, the sense that this isn't a situation where each country is only exporting and never importing, but rather that there's a balance in how we approach these issues. And again, I've actually been pleased with the degree to which there's common agreement on that front.

Prime Minister Brown. Tom, if you were asking this question in a situation where America had done a fiscal stimulus and no one other country except Britain had followed it, then your question would have some legitimacy. But, look, what has happened around the world in the last few months is country after country have contributed to the biggest fiscal stimulus, the biggest injection of resources, the biggest amount of new investment provided by governments into the world economy in the history of the world. And we are in the midst of the biggest fiscal boost that the world economy has ever had.

And so Germany has invested 80 billions; France invested 25 billions; we've invested; other countries in the European have invested. Different countries have their different times for announcing their decisions. Some will do it in their budget, some will do it be financial statements. The combination of all of this, as you will see when you get our communique tomorrow, is the most substantial fiscal stimulus, something on the order of $2 trillion, indeed, more than that. And that is the world coming together to cut interest rates, the world coming together to give a boost to the economy, and of course, the world coming together to deal with the other problem, which is restructuring our financial systems for the future.

And I think it is remarkable that things that people could not have thought possible 10 years ago, even 5 years ago, that you have this coordinated action from all the countries. It is remarkable this is happening. Of course, we want to push it forward tomorrow, and I believe we will.

President Obama. Where's Caren [Caren Bohan, Reuters]? There you are. Hey, Caren.

The President's Meeting With the President of Russia/Russia-U.S. Relations

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, Prime Minister. You mentioned that you will be meeting later with Russian President Medvedev. What are your aims for that meeting? And could you elaborate on this idea of resetting U.S.-Russian relations? And also, does that mean, as Russia hopes, that you're willing to give ground on issues like missile defense and NATO expansion?

President Obama. Well, this will be the first time that I'm meeting with President Medvedev. I'm very much looking forward to the meeting. We've had a series of conversations on the telephone and exchanged letters.

As I spoke about during the campaign, as Secretary of State Clinton has amplified in some of her remarks and her meetings with top Russian officials, what we've seen over the last several years is drift in the U.S.-Russian relationship. There are very real differences between the United States and Russia, and I have no interest in papering those over. But there are also a broad set of common interests that we can pursue. Both countries, I believe, have an interest in reducing nuclear stockpiles and promoting nuclear nonproliferation. Both countries have an interest in reducing the threat of terrorism. Both countries have an interest in stabilizing the world economy. Both countries have an interest in finding a sustainable path for energy and dealing with some of the threats of climate change that we've discussed.

So on a whole range of issues, from Afghanistan to Iran to the topics that will be consuming most of our time here at the G–20, I think there's great potential for concerted action. And that's what we will be pursuing.

Now, as has I think been noted in the press, a good place to start is the issue of nuclear proliferation. And one of the things that I've always believed strongly is that both the United States and Russia and other nuclear powers will be in a much stronger position to strengthen what has become a somewhat fragile, threadbare nonproliferation treaty if we are leading by example, and if we can take serious steps to reduce the nuclear arsenal.

I think people on both sides of the Atlantic understand that as much as the constant cloud, the threat of nuclear warfare has receded since the cold war, that the presence of these deadly weapons, their proliferation, the possibility of them finding their way into the hands of terrorists, continues to be the gravest threat to humanity. What better a project to start off than seeing if we can make progress on that front. I think we can.

Prime Minister Brown. Adam.

Timeframe for Economic Stabilization

Q. Both of you today have conjured the alarming specter of the Great Depression, but let's take your most optimistic hopes for this summit. Assuming you're successful, I suspect what millions of people around the world want to know is how much worse is this going to get and how long is it going to last and when is it going to end and growth return.

Prime Minister Brown. It will get worse if people do not act. The option of doing nothing is not available to us. And I think we've seen from past crises, both internationally and in regions of the world, that if people fail to take the decisive action at the beginning, then you risk a longer recession; you risk more businesses being lost; you risk more jobs lost. So of course, these are difficult decisions because governments are moving in where markets have failed and banks have collapsed. But to take these decisions is the right course for the world economy.

Now, I believe that the degree of international cooperation that we can get will determine how quickly all our economies can recover. If there is a stimulus in one country and it's repeated in another country and repeated in other countries, then you can magnify the effect of that stimulus round the world, both for the benefit of the individual country that's making it and for the rest of the world. And if you can see the coordinated cuts in interest rates coming together, then you've got to push for recovery and for new economic activity. And if you can see the banks, which operate internationally, being cleaned up in every country, then you have a situation where the world will feel confidence and there will be trust in the banking system for people to resume saving, investing, and preparing for the future.

So I believe the level of international cooperation will be one of the major factors that will determine how quickly we can recover. But what we are determined to do is, in this difficult time, protect people in their jobs, make sure that we can get money to mortgage holders and to businesses, and of course, make sure that countries that are in peril at the moment, who don't have their own resources and aren't able to restructure their banking systems, are given resources from the world to enable them to do so.

So the way forward is not to do nothing. The way forward is to take the action that's necessary.

President Obama. I agree with everything that Gordon said. It's been said repeatedly that every financial crisis comes to an end. So it will come to an end at some point. The question is, what have been the costs and how long the downturn.

I think people should take heart from the fact that governments have learned lessons from the thirties; central banks have learned lessons from the thirties. There has been much swifter action, much bolder action, much more coordinated action even prior to this summit than we have seen in previous financial crises. And that means that the prospects of restoring world growth and trade are that much greater.

I do think that Gordon is absolutely right. How well we execute it in the months to come, how well we button down these regulations, how well we each in our own respective countries help banks to deal with the impaired assets that they have on their books so that they can start lending again to businesses and consumers, how effective we are in managing the huge outflows of capital from emerging markets and provide a buffer for very poor and developing countries that are seeing huge contractions in their trade and just don't have a lot of margin for error, how well we reform our international financial institutions so that they can be a more effective player in this whole process, all those things will help determine

whether this ends up being a slow-rolling crisis that takes a lot more time to cure, or whether we start seeing significant recovery.

I don't think there's any doubt that 2009 is going to be difficult, and again, when you put a human face on this crisis, the way people experience it most immediately is losing their job, losing their home, losing their savings, losing their pensions. And what I think each of us is committed to doing is to make sure that people are getting immediate help, even as we're solving these broader structural problems, because we don't want that kind of suffering.

But it's also not good for the overall health of the economic system. And that's part of where stimulus has been very helpful. I mean, in our country, the unemployment insurance, the food stamps, the other mechanisms that have put money directly into people's pockets, that's not just good for those individual families; it's also helped to lift consumer spending or at least stabilize consumer spending in a way that will promise better growth in the future.

So, Hans Nichols [Bloomberg News].

Weathering the Current Economic Situation

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, Mr. Prime Minister. Mr. President, you just spoke about looking forward and not backward, and you also referenced the voracious appetite of the American consumer. What role should the European and American consumer then play in the quarter that starts today? Should they be spending or saving to alter the velocity of what you just called a slow-rolling crisis?

President Obama. Well, I think that each family has got to look at its circumstances and make those determinations. Obviously, there are a lot of people who are concerned about their job security, or they're concerned about seeing their savings having diminished if they were in the stock market, and I think it's an understandable response to be somewhat cautious in the midst of this kind of uncertainty.

I think the best advice I would have would be to say that despite the current hardships, we are going to get through this, and so you should plan sensibly, in anticipation that this economy is going to recover and new families, young families are going to want to buy new homes, and sooner or later that clunker of a car is going to wear out and people are going to want to buy a new car. And so that basing decisions around fear is not the right way to go.

We are going to get through this difficult time. And I think it is sometimes important to step back and just have some perspective about the differences between now and the Great Depression, when there were no social safety nets in place, when unemployment was 25 or 30 percent. I mean, this is a difficult time, but it's not what happened to our grandparents' generation.

And so I would ask people to be confident about their own futures. And that may mean, in some cases, spending now as investments for the future. There's been a debate back home about our budget. In the midst of this crisis, should we deal with health care? Should we deal with energy? Should we deal with education? And one of the analogies I've used is a family who is having a difficult time—and I actually get letters like this occasionally from voters—one of our parents has lost their job, savings have declined, and so I'm wrestling with whether or not I should go to college, because that will require me taking out a lot of debt, and maybe it would be more responsible for me to go find any job that I can to help the family.

And, you know, when I write back to those families or those individuals I say, you've obviously got to make these decisions yourself, but don't shortchange the future because of fear in the present. And that I think is the most important message that we can send not just in the United States but around the world.

Prime Minister Brown. Barack is absolutely right. Look, surely the most important thing is that people, by the decisions that are made, can have confidence in the future, confidence to be able to make decisions about whether to save or to spend. And all the measures that we are taking—restructuring the banks, putting money into the economy, the public works, and of course, the low-carbon activities that we're encouraging as well—are designed to give people the confidence that their savings are safe; that we've sorted out the problems and are sorting out the problems in the banking system; that we have put resources into economic activity in the

economy so that jobs can be saved and jobs can be created. And then people, as consumers, can make their own decisions about what they want to do.

And I think that's the key to the future, that people can see that the problems are being addressed and they themselves can have the confidence either to save or to spend or to invest, confidence in the future. And I believe that we can make a big step towards creating that confidence by some of the decisions that we can make together.

President Obama. All right?

Prime Minister Brown. George. Fine.

FIFA World Cup/Great Britain/Upcoming Elections in the United Kingdom

Q. Thank you. George Pascoe-Watson from The Sun. Mr. President, as a President who won with a landslide, have you got any advice for Gordon Brown, the Prime Minister? [*Laughter*] Secondly, what are your things you like most about Great Britain and London? And lastly, England are playing in a World Cup qualifying match in soccer, a game you love. Have you got any good luck message for the England team tonight?

President Obama. Well, let me take all these in turn. I have had enough trouble back home picking my brackets for the college basketball tournament that's taking place there, called March Madness—stirred up all kinds of controversy. The last thing I'm going to do is wade into European football. [*Laughter*] That would be a mistake. I didn't get a briefing on that, but I sense that would be a mistake. [*Laughter*]

Prime Minister Brown. England will win, I can tell you.

President Obama. So that would be point number one.

The thing I love about Great Britain is its people. And there is just a extraordinary affinity and kinship that we have. We owe so much to England, that when you come here there's that sense of familiarity, as well as difference, that makes it just a special place.

I have—the only advice I would give Gordon Brown is the same advice that I gave myself during the campaign and that I've been giving myself over the last 3 months, which is, over time, good policy is good politics. And if every day you are waking up and you are making the very best decisions that you can, despite the fact that sometimes the cards in your hand aren't very good and the options are narrow and the choices are tough, and you are assured to be second-guessed constantly, and that occasionally you're going to make mistakes, but if every day you're waking up saying, how can I make the best possible decisions to create jobs, help young people imagine a better future, provide care to the sick or the elderly or the vulnerable, sustain the planet, if those are the questions that you're asking yourself, then I think you end up doing pretty good.

And the best part is you can wake up and look at yourself in the mirror. And that, I think, is the kind of integrity that Gordon Brown has shown in the past and will continue to show in the future.

Prime Minister Brown. It's been an extraordinary visit already, and I've benefited from Barack's advice not just about elections, but about fitness; we've been talking about not the treadmill of politics, but the treadmill that we're both on every day, the running machines, and how you can manage to do that when you're traveling around the world and going to different countries, and we've been exchanging ideas.

Can I also say it's an extraordinary privilege to have Secretary of State Clinton here and Secretary of State [the Treasury]* Geithner, and we wish them well in everything that they do as well.

President Obama. And we thank the entire team. As I said, everybody has worked extraordinarily hard to make this successful. We are very grateful for the hospitality. There's one last thing that I should mention that I love about Great Britain, and that is the Queen. And so I'm very much looking forward to—[*laughter*]—I'm very much looking

* White House correction.

forward to meeting her for the first time later this evening. And as you might imagine, Michelle has been really thinking that through—[*laughter*]—because I think in the imagination of people throughout America, I think what the Queen stands for and her decency and her civility, what she represents, that's very important.

Prime Minister Brown. Well, I know the Queen is looking forward to welcoming you, and she's very much looking forward to her discussion with you.

So thank you very much.

President Obama. Thank you. Good to see you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 10:15 a.m. at the Foreign and Commonwealth Building. In his remarks, the President referred to John and Fraser Brown, sons of Prime Minister Brown; Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner; and Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom. A reporter referred to Mervyn Allistair King, governor, Bank of England.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia in London

April 1, 2009

President Obama. Let me just make a brief comment. I am very grateful to President Medvedev for taking the time to visit with me today. I'm particularly gratified because prior to the meeting, our respective teams had worked together and had developed a series of approaches to areas of common interest that I think present great promise.

As I've said in the past, I think that over the last several years the relationship between our two countries has been allowed to drift. And what I believe we've begun today is a very constructive dialog that will allow us to work on issues of mutual interest, like the reduction of nuclear weapons and the strengthening of our nonproliferation treaties, our mutual interest in dealing with terrorism and extremism that threatens both countries, our mutual interest in economic stability and restoring growth around the world, our mutual interest in promoting peace and stability in areas like the Middle East.

So I am very encouraged by the leadership of the President. I'm very grateful that he has taken the time to visit. I am especially excited about the fact that the President extended an invitation for me to visit Moscow to build on some of the areas that we discussed on today. And I have agreed to visit Moscow in July, which we both agreed was a better time than January to visit.

And my hope is that given the constructive conversations that we've had today, the joint statements that we will be issuing both on reductions of nuclear arsenals as well as a range of other areas of interest, that what we're seeing today is the beginning of new progress in the U.S.-Russian relations. And I think that President Medvedev's leadership is—has been critical in allowing that progress to take place.

So thank you very much.

President Medvedev. I would like to sincerely thank President Obama for this opportunity to meet him and to meet this time in person. And indeed, we had an opportunity to compare our views on the current relations and current situation in the world. And we had an opportunity to agree upon certain common values that we need to foster in our relations and provide for further areas for cooperation in progression of our relations.

I can only agree that the relations between our countries have been adrift over the past years. As President Obama has said, they were drifting and drifting in some wrong directions. They were degrading to some extent.

That is why we believe that since such a situation was not to the benefit of the United States or Russia Federation, to say nothing about the global situation, we believe that the time has come to reset our relations, as it was said, and to

open a new page in progression in the development of our common situation.

Indeed, it was said that we are prepared to cooperate further in such areas as the nonproliferation of WMDs, limitation of strategic weapons, countering terrorism, and improving economic and financial situation and the overall economic situation in the world.

It is important to note that there are many points on which we can work. And indeed, there are far more points in which we can—where we can come closer, where we can work, rather than those points on which we have differences. Thus, by bringing our positions closer, we can attain significant progress and, much more importantly, further our achievements.

I share the view of President Obama who said that our teams have worked really well in preparation of this meeting, and the declarations, the two declarations, which we are adopting are just another proof of that. And those are a declaration on the strategic weapons and the declaration on the general framework of relations between Russia and the United States, which set good grounds for our further interaction.

We will be very glad to host President Obama, to greet him in Moscow in July. Indeed, July is the warmest time in Russia and in Moscow, and I believe that will be exactly the feature of the talks and relations we are going to enjoy during that period in Moscow. And of course, we have set out certain objectives and certain goals and tasks we need to work through in order to get better prepared for this meeting. And indeed, I am convinced that is a good opportunity for this interaction.

Well, indeed, so we are convinced that we'll continue successfully our contacts, in particular today, where we were not only discussing international issues or bilateral items of interaction; we were also discussing education, which probably not everybody—where we have come to an understanding that we're reading the same textbooks while in these subjects. And this will set us further for interaction.

After this meeting, I am far more optimistic about the successful development of our relations and would like to thank President Obama for this opportunity.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:01 p.m. at Winfield House. President Medvedev spoke in Russian, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Joint Statement by President Barack Obama and President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia

April 1, 2009

Reaffirming that the era when our countries viewed each other as enemies is long over, and recognizing our many common interests, we today established a substantive agenda for Russia and the United States to be developed over the coming months and years. We are resolved to work together to strengthen strategic stability, international security, and jointly meet contemporary global challenges, while also addressing disagreements openly and honestly in a spirit of mutual respect and acknowledgement of each other's perspective.

We discussed measures to overcome the effects of the global economic crisis, strengthen the international monetary and financial system, restore economic growth, and advance regulatory efforts to ensure that such a crisis does not happen again.

We also discussed nuclear arms control and reduction. As leaders of the two largest nuclear weapons states, we agreed to work together to fulfill our obligations under Article VI of the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and demonstrate leadership in reducing the number of nuclear weapons in the world. We committed our two countries to achieving a nuclear free world, while recognizing that this long-term goal will require a new emphasis on arms control and conflict resolution measures, and their full implementation

by all concerned nations. We agreed to pursue new and verifiable reductions in our strategic offensive arsenals in a step-by-step process, beginning by replacing the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with a new, legally-binding treaty. We are instructing our negotiators to start talks immediately on this new treaty and to report on results achieved in working out the new agreement by July.

While acknowledging that differences remain over the purposes of deployment of missile defense assets in Europe, we discussed new possibilities for mutual international cooperation in the field of missile defense, taking into account joint assessments of missile challenges and threats, aimed at enhancing the security of our countries, and that of our allies and partners.

The relationship between offensive and defensive arms will be discussed by the two governments.

We intend to carry out joint efforts to strengthen the international regime for nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. In this regard we strongly support the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and are committed to its further strengthening. Together, we seek to secure nuclear weapons and materials, while promoting the safe use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. We support the activities of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and stress the importance of the IAEA Safeguards system. We seek universal adherence to IAEA comprehensive safeguards, as provided for in Article III of the NPT, and to the Additional Protocol and urge the ratification and implementation of these agreements. We will deepen cooperation to combat nuclear terrorism. We will seek to further promote the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism, which now unites 75 countries. We also support international negotiations for a verifiable treaty to end the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons. As a key measure of nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament, we underscored the importance of the entering into force the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. In this respect, President Obama confirmed his commitment to work for American ratification of this Treaty. We applaud the achievements made through the Nuclear Security Initiative launched in Bratislava in 2005, including to minimize the civilian use of Highly Enriched Uranium, and we seek to continue bilateral collaboration to improve and sustain nuclear security. We agreed to examine possible new initiatives to promote international cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy while strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime. We welcome the work of the IAEA on multilateral approaches to the nuclear fuel cycle and encourage efforts to develop mutually beneficial approaches with states considering nuclear energy or considering expansion of existing nuclear energy programs in conformity with their rights and obligations under the NPT. To facilitate cooperation in the safe use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, both sides will work to bring into force the bilateral Agreement for Cooperation in the Field of Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy. To strengthen non-proliferation efforts, we also declare our intent to give new impetus to implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1540 on preventing non-state actors from obtaining WMD-related materials and technologies.

We agreed to work on a bilateral basis and at international forums to resolve regional conflicts.

We agreed that al-Qaida and other terrorist and insurgent groups operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan pose a common threat to many nations, including the United States and Russia. We agreed to work toward and support a coordinated international response with the UN playing a key role. We also agreed that a similar coordinated and international approach should be applied to counter the flow of narcotics from Afghanistan, as well as illegal supplies of precursors to this country. Both sides agreed to work out new ways of cooperation to facilitate international efforts of stabilization, reconstruction and development in Afghanistan, including in the regional context.

We support the continuation of the Six-Party Talks at an early date and agreed to continue to pursue the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in accordance with purposes and principles of the September 19, 2005 Joint

Statement and subsequent consensus documents. We also expressed concern that a North Korean ballistic missile launch would be damaging to peace and stability in the region and agreed to urge the DPRK to exercise restraint and observe relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

While we recognize that under the NPT Iran has the right to a civilian nuclear program, Iran needs to restore confidence in its exclusively peaceful nature. We underline that Iran, as any other Non-Nuclear Weapons State-Party to the NPT, has assumed the obligation under Article II of that Treaty in relation to its non-nuclear weapon status. We call on Iran to fully implement the relevant U.N. Security Council and the IAEA Board of Governors resolutions including provision of required cooperation with the IAEA. We reiterated their commitment to pursue a comprehensive diplomatic solution, including direct diplomacy and through P–5-plus-1 negotiations, and urged Iran to seize this opportunity to address the international community's concerns.

We also started a dialogue on security and stability in Europe. Although we disagree about the causes and sequence of the military actions of last August, we agreed that we must continue efforts toward a peaceful and lasting solution to the unstable situation today. Bearing in mind that significant differences remain between us, we nonetheless stress the importance of last year's six-point accord of August 12, the September 8 agreement, and other relevant agreements, and pursuing effective cooperation in the Geneva discussions to bring stability to the region.

We agreed that the resumption of activities of the NATO-Russia Council is a positive step. We welcomed the participation of an American delegation at the special Conference on Afghanistan convened under the auspices of Shanghai Cooperation Organization last month.

We discussed our interest in exploring a comprehensive dialogue on strengthening Euro-Atlantic and European security, including existing commitments and President Medvedev's June 2008 proposals on these issues. The OSCE is one of the key multilateral venues for this dialogue, as is the NATO-Russia Council.

We also agreed that our future meetings must include discussions of transnational threats such as terrorism, organized crime, corruption and narcotics, with the aim of enhancing our cooperation in countering these threats and strengthening international efforts in these fields, including through joint actions and initiatives.

We will strive to give rise to a new dynamic in our economic links including the launch of an intergovernmental commission on trade and economic cooperation and the intensification of our business dialogue. Especially during these difficult economic times, our business leaders must pursue all opportunities for generating economic activity. We both pledged to instruct our governments to make efforts to finalize as soon as possible Russia's accession into the World Trade Organization and continue working towards the creation of favorable conditions for the development of Russia-U.S. economic ties.

We also pledge to promote cooperation in implementing Global Energy Security Principles, adopted at the G–8 summit in Saint Petersburg in 2006, including improving energy efficiency and the development of clean energy technologies.

Today we have outlined a comprehensive and ambitious work plan for our two governments. We both affirmed a mutual desire to organize contacts between our two governments in a more structured and regular way. Greater institutionalized interactions between our ministries and departments make success more likely in meeting the ambitious goals that we have established today.

At the same time, we also discussed the desire for greater cooperation not only between our governments, but also between our societies—more scientific cooperation, more students studying in each other's country, more cultural exchanges, and more cooperation between our nongovernmental organizations. In our relations with each other, we also seek to be guided by the rule of law, respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights, and tolerance for different views.

We, the leaders of Russia and the United States, are ready to move beyond Cold War mentalities and chart a fresh start in relations between our two countries. In just a few months we have worked hard to establish a new tone in our relations. Now it is time to get down to business and translate our warm words into actual achievements of benefit to Russia, the United States, and all those around the world interested in peace and prosperity.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Joint Statement Between the United States of America and Russia Regarding Negotiations on Further Reductions in Strategic Offensive Arms
April 1, 2009

The President of the United States of America, Barack Obama, and the President of the Russian Federation, Dmitriy A. Medvedev, noted that the Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START Treaty), which expires in December 2009, has completely fulfilled its intended purpose and that the maximum levels for strategic offensive arms recorded in the Treaty were reached long ago. They have therefore decided to move further along the path of reducing and limiting strategic offensive arms in accordance with U.S. and Russian obligations under Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The Presidents decided to begin bilateral intergovernmental negotiations to work out a new, comprehensive, legally binding agreement on reducing and limiting strategic offensive arms to replace the START Treaty. The United States and the Russian Federation intend to conclude this agreement before the Treaty expires in December. In this connection, they instructed their delegations at the negotiations to proceed on basis of the following:

- The subject of the new agreement will be the reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms;
- In the future agreement the Parties will seek to record levels of reductions in strategic offensive arms that will be lower than those in the 2002 Moscow Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions, which is currently in effect;
- The new agreement will mutually enhance the security of the Parties and predictability and stability in strategic offensive forces, and will include effective verification measures drawn from the experience of the Parties in implementing the START Treaty.

They directed their negotiators to report on progress achieved in working out the new agreement by July 2009.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Hu Jintao of China in London
April 1, 2009

President Obama. I just want to welcome President Hu and thank him for extending himself to come to visit and allowing us to have our first face to face conversation.

Obviously, China is a great power. It has a long and extraordinary history. The relationship between the United States and China has become extremely constructive. Our economic relationships are very strong. And I've said publicly, and I continue to believe, that the relationship between China and the United States is not only important for the citizens of both our

countries, but will help to set the stage for how the world deals with a whole host of challenges in the years to come.

So I'm looking forward to a very productive and open conversation about not only the state of the world economy during this time of crisis, but also know we can work cooperatively together to improve peace and security for both nations and the world at large.

I believe that as strong as our relationship already is, I am confident that we can make it even stronger in the years to come.

President Hu. I'm very happy to have this opportunity to meet with President Obama. It's our first face-to-face meeting.

Since President Obama took office, we have secured a good beginning in the growth of this relationship. President Obama and I stayed in close touch, and foreign ministers of our two countries have exchanged visits in a short span of time.

In addition, the two sides both have reached agreement on the characterization of the China-U.S. relationship in this new era and on the mechanism of the strategic economic dialogs. These results have not come easily, which deserve our both sides' efforts to cherish.

And as President Obama rightly said just now, sound China-U.S. relationship is not only in the fundamental interest of our two peoples and our two countries, but also contributes to peace, stability, and prosperity in the Asian-Pacific region and in the world at large.

The Chinese side is willing to work together with the U.S. side to secure even greater progress in the development of the China-U.S. relationship, and I'm willing to establish a good working relationship and personal friendship with President Obama.

I'm sure my meeting with President Obama today will be positive and productive.

President Obama. If I'm not mistaken, we're going to have our respective representatives on the strategic and economic dialog appear with us, so that everybody knows who's going to be talking.

So these high-level ministers will be charged with working in a very detailed and constructive way on issues of mutual interest to our two countries. And we are very grateful to President Hu for designating such distinguished ministers who are going to be working very constructively with Tim Geithner, my Secretary of Treasury, as well as Hillary Clinton, the Secretary of State.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:24 p.m. at Winfield House. President Hu referred to Minister of Foreign Affairs Yang Jiechi of China. President Hu spoke in Chinese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea in London, England

April 2, 2009

Hold on a second, let's make a brief statement. I just want to thank President Lee and his entire delegation. Korea is one of America's closest allies and greatest friends. And under President Lee's leadership, that friendship has only grown stronger. So we are very interested in discussing the economic crisis, which is the topic of the G–20 meeting. But, obviously, we also have a great range of issues to discuss: on defense, on peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula, on the outstanding contributions that Korea has made with respect to the Afghanistan situation, and their global role and global leadership on issues like climate change.

So I just want to publicly say thank you to the Republic of Korea for their outstanding friendship and the close ties between our two countries.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8 a.m. at the ExCeL centre. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on House of Representative Passage of the Fiscal Year 2010 Budget
April 2, 2009

Tonight the House of Representatives took another step toward rebuilding our struggling economy. This budget resolution embraces our most fundamental priorities: an energy plan that will end our dependence on foreign oil and spur a new clean energy economy, an education system that will ensure our children will be able to compete in the economy of the 21st century, and health care reform that finally confronts the back-breaking costs plaguing families, businesses, and government alike. And by making hard choices and challenging the old ways of doing business, we will cut in half the budget deficit we inherited within 4 years. With this vote comes an obligation to pursue our efforts to go through the budget line by line, searching for additional savings. Like the families we serve, we must cut the things we don't need to invest in those we do.

The President's News Conference in London
April 2, 2009

The President. Good afternoon, or good evening; we're running a little bit late. Earlier today, we finished a very productive summit that will be, I believe, a turning point in our pursuit of global economic recovery. By any measure, the London summit was historic. It was historic because of the size and the scope of the challenges that we face and because of the timeliness and magnitude of our response.

The challenge is clear. The global economy is contracting. Trade is shrinking. Unemployment is rising. The international finance system is nearly frozen. Even these facts can't fully capture the crisis that we're confronting, because behind them is the pain and uncertainty that so many people are facing. We see it back in the United States. We see it here in London. We see it around the world: families losing their homes, workers losing their jobs and their savings, students who are deferring their dreams. So many have lost so much. Just to underscore this point, back in the United States, jobless claims released today were the highest in 26 years. We owe it to all of our citizens to act and to act with a sense of urgency.

In an age where our economies are linked more closely than ever before, the whole world has been touched by this devastating downturn. And today the world's leaders have responded with an unprecedented set of comprehensive and coordinated actions.

Now, just keep in mind some historical context. Faced with similar global challenges in the past, the world was slow to act, and people paid an enormous price. That was true in the Great Depression, when nations prolonged and worsened the crisis by turning inward, waiting for more than a decade to meet the challenge together. Even as recently as the 1980s, the slow global response deepened and widened a debt crisis in Latin America that pushed millions into poverty.

Today, we've learned the lessons of history. I know that in the days leading up to the summit, some of you in the press, some commentators, confused honest and open debate with irreconcilable differences. But after weeks of preparation and 2 days of careful negotiation, we have agreed on a series of unprecedented steps to restore growth and prevent a crisis like this from happening again.

Let me outline what I think has been most significant.

Number one, we are committed to growth and job creation. All G–20 nations have acted to stimulate demand, which will total well over $2 trillion in global fiscal expansion. The United States is also partnering with the private sector to clean out the troubled assets, the legacy assets that are crippling some banks, and using the full force of the Government to ensure that our action leads directly to loans to businesses large and small, as well as individuals who

depend on credit. And these efforts will be amplified by our G–20 partners, who are pursuing similarly comprehensive programs.

And we also agreed on bold action to support developing countries, so that we aren't faced with declining markets that the global economy depends on. Together, the G–20 is tripling the IMF's lending capacity and promoting lending by multilateral development banks to increase the purchasing power and expand markets in every country.

We've also rejected the protectionism that could deepen this crisis. History tells us that turning inward can help turn a downturn into a depression. And this cooperation between the world's leading economies signals our support for open markets, as does our multilateral commitment to trade finance that will grow our exports and create new jobs. That's all on the growth front.

And next, we made enormous strides in committing ourselves to comprehensive reform of a failed regulatory system. And together, I believe that we must put an end to the bubble-and-bust economy that has stood in the way of sustained growth and enabled abusive risk-taking that endangers our prosperity.

At home, back in the States, our efforts began with an approach that Secretary Geithner proposed last week, the strongest regulatory reforms any nation has contemplated so far to prevent the massive failure of responsibility that we have already seen. Today, these principles have informed and enabled the coordinated action that we will take with our G–20 partners.

To prevent future crises, we agreed to increased transparency and capital protections for financial institutions. We're extending supervision to all systemically important institutions, markets, and products, including hedge funds. We'll identify jurisdictions that fail to cooperate, including tax havens, and take action to defend our financial system. We will reestablish the Financial Stability Forum with a stronger mandate. And we will reform and expand the IMF and World Bank so they are more efficient, effective, and representative.

Finally, we are protecting those who don't always have a voice at the G–20, but who have suffered greatly in this crisis. And the United States is ready to lead in this endeavor. In the coming days, I intend to work with Congress to provide $448 million in immediate assistance to vulnerable populations from Africa to Latin America and to double support for food safety to over $1 billion so that we are giving people the tools they need to lift themselves out of poverty. We will also support the United Nations and World Bank as they coordinate the rapid assistance necessary to prevent humanitarian catastrophe. I have to say, though, that this is not just charity. These are all future markets for all countries and future drivers of world economic growth.

Let me also underscore my appreciation to Prime Minister Brown, his entire team, and all my colleagues from around the world who contributed to the summit's success. You know, it's hard for 20 heads of state to bridge their differences. We've all got our own national policies; we all have our own assumptions, our own political cultures. But our citizens are all hurting. They all need us to come together. So I'm pleased that the G–20 has agreed to meet again this fall, because I believe that this is just the beginning. Our problems are not going to be solved in one meeting; they're not going to be solved in two meetings. We're going to have to be proactive in shaping events and persistent in monitoring our progress to determine whether further action is needed.

I also want to just make a few remarks about additional meetings I had outside of the G–20 context. While here in London, I had the opportunity to hold bilateral meetings with leaders of Russia, China, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, and India, as well as Great Britain. And these discussions were extraordinarily valuable and productive. Of course, we spoke about additional steps to promote economic recovery and growth. But we also discussed coordinated actions on a range of issues: how we could reduce the nuclear threat; how we could forge a coordinated response to North Korea's planned missile launch; how we can turn back terrorism and stabilize Afghanistan; how we can protect our planet from the scourge of climate change. I'm encouraged that we laid the

groundwork for real and lasting progress on a host of these issues.

Ultimately, the challenges of the 21st century can't be met without collective action. Agreement will almost never be easy, and results won't always come quickly. But I am committed to respecting different points of view and to forging a consensus instead of dictating our terms. That's how we made progress in the last few days. And that's how we will advance and uphold our ideals in the months and years to come.

You know, at home, I've often spoken about a new era of responsibility. And I believe strongly that this era must not end at our borders. In a world that's more and more interconnected, we all have responsibilities to work together to solve common challenges. And although it will take time, I am confident that we will rebuild global prosperity if we act with a common sense of purpose, persistence, and the optimism that the moment demands.

So I appreciate your attention, and I'm going to take a few questions. And I've got a list of a few people I'm going to call on, and then I am—I will intersperse some folks I'm calling on randomly.

Helene Cooper [New York Times]. There you are.

Effectiveness of G–20 Summit

Q. Mr. President, you've had 2 days now—[*inaudible*]—on the world stage, how do you think it's going so far? And is there anything about your performance over the past 2 days that made you cringe?

The President. Well, I think we did okay. You know, when I came here, it was with the intention of listening and learning, but also providing American leadership. And I think that the document that has been produced as well as the concrete actions that will follow reflect a range of our priorities.

We wanted to make sure that we had a strong, coordinated response to growth, and that's reflected in the document and in the actions that will be taken. We thought it was important to make sure that we had a strong, coordinated regulatory response, and many of the details of the regulatory response draw from principles that we had developed prior to coming here.

We felt that it was very important to strengthen our international financial institutions because developing countries, emerging markets are threatened. Even though they may not have been the cause of this crisis, they are threatened by capital flight. They're threatened by reduced trade finance, drops in consumer demand in developed countries that were their export markets, and so we knew that it was going to be important to provide those countries with assistance. And we have created as fundamental a reworking of the resources available to these international financial institutions as anything we've done in the last several decades.

So overall, I'm pleased with the product. And I'll leave it to others to determine whether me and my team had anything to do with that. All right?

Chuck Todd [NBC News]. Chuck.

Achievements of G–20 Summit

Q. What concrete items that you got out of this G–20 can you tell the American people back home who are hurting, the family struggling, seeing their retirement go down, or worrying about losing their job? What happened here today that helps that family back home in the heartland?

The President. Well, as I said before, we've got a global economy, and if we're taking actions in isolation in the United States, but those actions are contradicted overseas, then we're only going to be halfway effective, maybe not even half.

You've seen, for example, a drastic decline in U.S. exports over the last several months. You look at a company like Caterpillar, in my home State of Illinois, which up until last year was doing extraordinarily well; in fact, export growth was what had sustained it even after the recession had begun. As a consequence of the world recession, as a consequence of the contagion from the financial markets debilitating economies elsewhere, Caterpillar is now in very bad shape. So if we want to get Caterpillar back on its feet, if we want to get all those export companies back on their feet so that they are hiring, putting people back to work, putting money in

people's pockets, we've got to make sure that the global economy as a whole is successful.

And this document, which affirms the need for all countries to take fiscal responses that increase demand, that encourages the openness of markets, those are all going to be helpful in us being able to fix what ails the economy back home. All right.

Let me mix in a—Justin Webb, BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation]. Where's Justin? There he is. Go ahead.

Compromise at G–20 Summit/Global Economic Stabilization

Q. Mr. President, in the spirit of openness, with which you say you're——

The President. Why don't you get a microphone? See, everybody is complaining. [*Laughter*] I'm sure that's all your fellow British journalists. [*Laughter*]

Q. They're extraordinarily well behaved, Mr. President. [*Laughter*] In the spirit of openness, with which you say you're going to run your administration, could you give us an insight into an area or areas where you came to London wanting something and you didn't get it, where you compromised, where you gave something away to achieve the wider breakthrough agreement?

The President. Well, I think that if you look at the language of the document, there are probably some areas where it wasn't so much of a sacrifice as it might not have been our number-one priority, but it became clear that it was very important to certain other actors.

I'd rather not specify what those precise items would be, because this is a collective document. But there's no doubt that each country has its own quirks and own particular issues that a leader may decide is really, really important, something that is nonnegotiable for them. And what we tried to do as much as possible was to accommodate those issues in a way that did not hamper the effectiveness of the overall document to address what I think are the core issues related to this crisis.

Now, keep in mind, I think that this kind of coordination really is historic. I said in the meeting that if you had imagined 10 years ago or 20 years ago or 30 years ago, that you'd have the leaders of Germany, France, China, Russia, Brazil, South Africa, a President of the United States named Obama—[*laughter*]—former adversaries, in some cases former mortal enemies, negotiating this swiftly on behalf of fixing the global economy, you would have said that's crazy. And yet it was happening, and it happened with relatively little—relatively few hiccups. And I think that's a testimony to the great work that Gordon Brown did, and his team, in organizing the summit, the collective work in our teams in doing some good preparation, some good ground work. So I'm very proud of what's been done.

This alone is not enough. And obviously, the actions that each of us take in our individual countries are still absolutely vital. So we have a set of principles, for example, around dealing with systemic risk that I think will be very important in preventing the kinds of financial crisis that we've seen.

That does not entirely solve the problem of toxic assets that are still in U.S. banks and certain British banks and certain European banks. And how each individual nation acts to deal with that is still going to be vitally important. How well we execute the respective stimulus programs around the world is going to be very important. The quicker they are, the more effective they are at actually boosting demand, the more all of us will benefit. The more encumbered they are by bureaucracy and mismanagement and corruption, that will hamper our development efforts as a whole.

So this is not a panacea, but it is a critical step, and I think it lays the foundation so that, should the actions that we've taken individually and collectively so far not succeed in boosting global demand and growth, should you continue to see a freezing of credit or a hemorrhaging of jobs around the world, I think we've created a good foundation for this leadership to come back together again and take additional steps until we get it right.

Okay, Michael Shear [Washington Post]. Where's Michael? There you go.

U.S. Foreign Policy

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I wonder if you view this trip that you're on and the actions that you've taken here at the G–20 and with the bilateral meetings that you've had as representing a break from the foreign policy of your predecessor. And if so, could you describe where you see and how you see the principles that guide a different view of the world?

The President. Well, you know, I didn't accompany President Bush on his various summits, so I don't know how he was operating. And I won't warrant a guess on that.

I can tell you that what I've tried to do since I started running for President, and since I was sworn in as President, is to communicate the notion that America is a critical actor and leader on the world stage, and that we shouldn't be embarrassed about that, but that we exercise our leadership best when we are listening; when we recognize that the world is a complicated place and that we are going to have to act in partnership with other countries; when we lead by example; when we show some element of humility and recognize that we may not always have the best answer, but we can always encourage the best answer and support the best answer.

So I think that's the approach that we've tried to take in our foreign policy since my administration came in. Now, we come in at extraordinarily challenging times, and yet I actually think that that calls for this type of leadership even more. But ultimately, we won't know how effective we are until we look back a year from now or 2 years from now or 3 years from now and see if it worked.

And what the American people care about, I suspect, are the same thing that the British people care about, and that is, are you putting people back to work? Are businesses growing again? Is business—is credit flowing again? And, you know—and that's just true with respect to this summit. But when it comes to our Afghanistan policy, the question is going to be, have we made ourselves safer? Have we reduced the risks and incidents of terrorism?

And so the proof of the pudding is in the eating. But hopefully, I think, at least we've set a tone internationally where people don't—where they give us the benefit of the doubt. They're still going to have their interests, and we're going to have ours. There are going to be tough negotiations, and sometimes we're going to have to walk away from those negotiations if we can't arrive at a common accord. There are going to be real dangers that can't always be talked through and have to be addressed. But at least we can start with the notion that we're prepared to listen and to work cooperatively with countries around the world.

All right, let me sprinkle in another—it's got to be an international person. All right, this young lady right there.

Executive Compensation

Q. Mr. President, Emma Alberici from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. At the moment, in the U.S., the U.K., and in Australia, executive salaries and bonuses are decided in the boardrooms of major publicly-listed companies. Who will be making those decisions on salaries and bonuses as a result of the agreement you've made here today? And if it is still the boards, will they be guided by principles or legislation?

The President. The principles that we outlined, I think, put in place or move us in the direction of what I consider to be best practices, which is that there is some accountability with respect to executive compensation.

Now, theoretically, that should be the shareholders. But the way that too many corporations have operated for too long is that you have a CEO who basically selects his board; the board, in a fairly cozy relationship oftentimes with the executive, hires a executive compensation firm, which, surprisingly, tends to think that it's necessary to retain the best talent to pay people $20 or $30 million a year; and we get into the kinds of habits and practices that I think have not been—have not served shareholders well, I think, ultimately, distort the decisionmaking of many CEOs.

When I was in the United States Senate, I actually worked on a piece of legislation that would make the simple proposition that executive compensation should be subject to a shareholder vote, even if it was nonbinding, so that

there was transparency and accountability and perhaps a shame function that would take place. And that principle, I think, is reflected in these guidelines.

What it says is, is that if you get shareholders involved and those shareholders are given a set of principles and best practices by which they can judge executive compensation, then you can still have outsized rewards and success for successful businesspeople, but it will be based on not short-term performance, not 3-month performance, not your ability to flip quick profits off products like derivatives that don't turn out to be particularly productive to the company, but based on sustained, effective growth. And that's what's embodied in these documents, and I think that you're going to see a lot of countries try to encourage that kind of transparency and accountability.

It doesn't mean the state micromanaging——

[*At this point, the President sneezed.*]

The President. Excuse me, I've been fighting this all week. It doesn't mean that we want the state dictating salaries; we don't. We—I strongly believe in a free-market system, and as I think people understand in America, at least, people don't resent the rich; they want to be rich. And that's good. But we want to make sure that there's mechanisms in place that holds people accountable and produces results. Okay?

Got to go back to my crew. Jake Tapper [ABC News].

Effectiveness of G–20 Meeting

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Two questions. One, can you say with confidence that the steps the G–20 nations are taking today—committing to today will help the world or will prevent the world to avoid a depression or a deeper recession?

And two, your friend and ally, Prime Minister Brown, said that "the old Washington consensus is over; today we have reached a new consensus." Is he right? And what do you think he meant by that?

The President. In life there are no guarantees, and economics there are no guarantees. The people who thought they could provide guarantees, many of them worked at AIG, and it didn't work out so well. So there are always risks involved.

I have no doubt, though, that the steps that have been taken are critical to preventing us sliding into a depression. They are bolder and more rapid than any international response that we've seen to a financial crisis in memory. And I think that they will have a concrete effect in our ability, individually, in each nation, to create jobs, save jobs that exist, grow the economy, loosen up credit, restore trust and confidence in the financial markets.

So these steps—another way of putting it is, I think the steps in the communique were necessary. Whether they're sufficient, we've got to wait and see. I'm actually confident, though, that given the common commitment in the United States and in the other G–20 countries to act rapidly and boldly, that if we see other inklings of panic in the marketplace or things unwinding, that this group, once again, will respond as needed.

So I guess maybe just to use an analogy that was used several times in this meeting, an analogy that I've used in the past: You've got a sick patient; I think we applied the right medicine. I think the patient is stabilized. There's still wounds that have to heal, and there's still emergencies that could arise, but I think that you've got some pretty good care being applied.

You had a second, followup question?

Globalization

Q. Prime Minister Brown saying——

The President. Oh, the Washington consensus. Well, the Washington consensus, as I'm sure you're aware, Jake, is sort of a term of art about a certain set of policies surrounding globalization and the application of a cookie-cutter model to economic growth—trade liberalization, deregulation—that was popular and did help globalize and grow the economy and was led by some of our leading economists and policymakers in Washington.

I think that there's always been a spectrum of opinion about how unfettered the free market is. And along that spectrum, I think there have been some who believe in very fierce regulation and are very suspicious of globalization, and there are others who think that it's always—that the market is always king. And I think what we've learned here—but if anybody had been studying history they would have understood earlier—is that the market is the most effective mechanism for creating wealth and distributing resources to produce goods and services that history has ever known, but that it goes off the rails sometimes, that if it's completely unregulated, that if there are no thoughtful frameworks to channel the creative energy of the market, that it can end up in a very bad place.

And so, in that sense, I think that we just went through a couple of decades where there was an artificial complacency about the dangers of markets going off the rails. And a crisis like this reminds us that we just have to put in some commonsense rules of the road, without throwing out the enormous benefits that globalization have brought in terms of improving living standards, reducing the cost of goods, and bringing the world closer together.

All right, I've got time for just a couple more questions. I'm going to find a journalist here——

[*Many reporters began speaking at the same time.*]

The President. [*Laughter*] All right. Here, I'm going to call on this gentleman right here. He's been very persistent.

Balancing Domestic and Foreign Policy Priorities

Q. Excuse me. Rui Chenggang of China Central Television. Since the world leaders have been talking about increasing the voice and voting rights of developing countries, I would like to ask two questions instead of just one. First one, on behalf of China——

The President. I may choose which one I want to answer. [*Laughter*]

Q. Of course.

The President. That's always the danger of asking two questions. [*Laughter*]

Q. First of all, you've had a very fruitful meeting with our President. And during the Clinton administration, U.S.-China relationship were characterized, in Clinton's words, "strategic, constructive partnership." During the Bush era, it was—the catchphrase was quote-unquote, "stakeholder"—the Bush administration expects China to become a responsible stakeholder in international affairs. Have you come up with a catchphrase of your own? And certainly, it is not the G–2, is it?

My second question is on behalf of the world. Politics is very local, even though we've been talking about global solution, as indicated by your recent preference over American journalists and British, which is okay. [*Laughter*] How can you make sure that you will do whatever you can so that that local politics will not trump or negatively affect good international economics? Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Well, those are excellent questions. On the first question, your American counterparts will tell you I'm terrible with those little catchphrases and sound bites. So I haven't come up with anything catchy yet, but if you have any suggestions, let me know. [*Laughter*] I'll be happy to use them.

In terms of local politics, look, I'm the President of the United States. I'm not the president of China; I'm not the president of Japan; I'm not the president of the other participants here. And so I have a direct responsibility to my constituents to make their lives better. That's why they put me in there. That accounts for some of the questions here about how concretely does me being here help them find a job, pay for their home, send their kids to college, live what we call the American Dream. And I will be judged by my effectiveness in meeting their needs and concerns.

But in an era of integration and interdependence, it is also my responsibility to lead America into recognizing that its interests, its fate is tied up with the larger world; that if we neglect or abandon those who are suffering in poverty, that not only are we depriving ourselves of potential opportunities for markets and economic growth, but, ultimately, that despair may turn to

violence that turns on us; that unless we are concerned about the education of all children and not just our children, not only may we be depriving ourselves of the next great scientist who's going to find the next new energy source that saves the planet, but we also may make people around the world much more vulnerable to anti-American propaganda.

So if I'm effective as America's President right now, part of that effectiveness involves holding a—providing Americans insight into how their self-interest is tied up with yours. And that's an ongoing project because it's not always obvious.

And there are going to be times where short-term interests are going to differ—there's no doubt about it—and protectionism is the classic example. You can make arguments that if you can get away with protecting your markets, as long as the other folks don't protect theirs, then in the short term you may benefit. And it then becomes important not only for me to try to give people a sense of why, over the long term, that's counterproductive, but also it becomes important for me to put policies in place in the United States that provide a cushion, provide support for those people who may suffer local dislocations because of globalization. And that's something that I think every government has to think about.

There are individuals who will be harmed by a trade deal. There are businesses who will go out of business because of free trade. And to the extent that a government is not there to help them reshape their company or retrain for the new jobs that are being created, over time, you're going to get people who see—who rightly see their personal self-interest in very narrow terms. Okay?

Two more questions. Jonathan Weisman [Wall Street Journal].

U.S. Global Influence

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. During the campaign you often spoke of a diminished power and authority of the United States over the last decade. This is your first time in an international summit like this, and I'm wondering what evidence you saw of what you spoke of during the campaign. And specifically, is the declaration of the end of the Washington consensus evidence of the diminished authority that you feared was out there?

The President. Well, first of all, during the campaign I did not say that some of that loss of authority was inevitable. I said it was traced to very specific decisions that the previous administration had made that I believed had lowered our standing in the world. And that wasn't simply my opinion; that was, it turns out, the opinion of many people around the world.

I would like to think that with my election and the early decisions that we've made, that you're starting to see some restoration of America's standing in the world. And although, as you know, I always mistrust polls, international polls seem to indicate that you're seeing people more hopeful about America's leadership.

Now, we remain the largest economy in the world by a pretty significant margin. We remain the most powerful military on Earth. Our production of culture, our politics, our media still have—I didn't mean to say that with such scorn, guys—[*laughter*]—you know I'm teasing—still has enormous influence. And so I do not buy into the notion that America can't lead in the world. I wouldn't be here if I didn't think that we had important things to contribute.

I just think in a world that is as complex as it is, that it is very important for us to be able to forge partnerships as opposed to simply dictating solutions. Just a—just to try to crystallize the example, there's been a lot of comparison here about Bretton Woods—"oh, well, last time you saw the entire international architecture being remade." Well, if it's just Roosevelt and Churchill sitting in a room with a brandy, that's an easier negotiation. [*Laughter*] But that's not the world we live in, and it shouldn't be the world that we live in.

And so that's not a loss for America; it's an appreciation that Europe is now rebuilt and a powerhouse; Japan is rebuilt, is a powerhouse; China, India—these are all countries on the move. And that's good; that means there are millions of people—billions of people—who

are working their way out of poverty. And over time, that potentially makes this a much more peaceful world.

And that's the kind of leadership we need to show, one that helps guide that process of orderly integration without taking our eyes off the fact that it's only as good as the benefits of individual families, individual children. Is it giving them more opportunity? Is it giving them a better life? If we judge ourselves by those standards, then I think America can continue to show leadership for a very long time.

I'm going to call one foreigner—[*laughter*]—actually, I'm the foreigner. That's why I smiled. One correspondent not from America, and then I will——

[*Many reporters began speaking at the same time.*]

The President. We're not doing bidding here. [*Laughter*] Come on. But I also want to make sure that I'm not showing gender bias. So this young lady right here; not you, sir, I'm sorry.

India and Pakistan

Q. Hi, Mr. President.

The President. How are you?

Q. Thank you for choosing me. I'm very well. I'm Simrat from the Times of India.

The President. Wonderful.

Q. You met with our Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh. What did you—what is America doing to help India tackle terrorism emanating from Pakistan?

The President. Well, first of all, your Prime Minister is a wonderful man.

Q. Thank you. I agree. [*Laughter*]

The President. Well——

Q. I agree.

The President. Did you have something to do with that, or—[*laughter*]. You seem to kind of take credit for it a little bit there. [*Laughter*]

Q. I'm just really proud of him, sir.

The President. Of course. You should be proud of him. I'm teasing you.

I think he's a very wise and decent man and has done a wonderful job in guiding India, even prior to being Prime Minister, along a path of extraordinary economic growth that is a marvel, I think, for all the world.

We did discuss the issue of terrorism. And we discussed it not simply in terms of terrorism emanating from Pakistan, although, obviously, we are very concerned about extremists and terrorists who have made camp in the border regions of Pakistan as well as in Afghanistan. But we spoke about it more broadly in terms of how we can coordinate effectively on issues of counterterrorism.

We also spoke about the fact that in a nuclear age, at a time when perhaps the greatest enemy of both India and Pakistan should be poverty, that it may make sense to create a more effective dialog between India and Pakistan. But obviously, we didn't go in depth into those issues.

We talked about a whole range of other issues related to, for example, energy, and how important it is for the United States to lead by example in reducing our carbon footprint so that we can help to forge agreements with countries like China and India that, on a per capita basis, have a much smaller footprint and so justifiably chafe at the idea that they should have to sacrifice their development for our efforts to control climate change, but also acknowledging that if China and India, with their populations, had the same energy usage as the average American, then we would have all melted by now.

And so that was a very interesting conversation that I will be pursuing not just with India, but, hopefully, with China and with other countries around the world. In some ways our European counterparts have moved more quickly than we have on this issue. But I think even the Europeans have recognized that it's not easy. It's even harder during times of economic downturn.

And so we're going to have to combine the low-hanging fruit of energy efficiency with rapid technological advances. And to the extent that in some cases we can get international cooperation and pool our scientific and technical knowledge around things like developing coal sequestration, for example, that can be extremely helpful. Okay?

I'm going to call on my last American correspondent, Chip [Chip Reid, CBS News]. And, Chip, my heart goes out to you.

U.S. Role in the Global Economic Situation

Q. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I appreciate that.

The President. Yes. I just heard about that.

Q. Certainly there is a lot of sentiment in G–20 countries that the United States was a major cause of the global economic meltdown. To what degree did that topic come up in your discussions? Did it make it difficult for some countries to accept advice from the United States when they blame the United States and its economic system for causing this in the first place? And how do you respond to people who do blame America?

The President. Well, you know, I don't think that—I think my colleagues in the G–20 were extraordinarily gracious about my participation. I think that they continue to express the desire to work with America, admiration about many things American. There were occasional comments, usually wedged into some other topic, that indicated from their perspective that this started in America, or this started on Wall Street, or this started with particular banks or companies.

Perhaps what helped was my willingness to acknowledge that—and it's hard to deny—that some of this contagion did start on Wall Street. And as I've said back home, as I've said in public, and as I would say in private, we had a number of firms that took wild and unjustified risks; we had regulators that were asleep at the switch. And it has taken an enormous toll on the U.S. economy and has spread to the world economy.

Now, I think that part of the reason people didn't give me too hard a time is because if you look at European banks or Asian banks, that they've had their own issues both in the past and in the future. And I think there was a very constructive discussion about the fact that, given global financial flows, that unless we've got much more effective coordinated regulatory strategies, supervision, standards, that these problems will appear again.

Money is—can move around the globe in a second. And it will seek out the highest returns, and if those highest returns end up being built on a house of cards, then we're going to be seeing another threat to the world financial system wherever that house of cards might be.

And so, overall, I think there was an extraordinarily constructive approach among all the leaders. I was very impressed with them. I'm very grateful to them. And I'm excited about the ability not just to help heal this economy but also to make progress on a sustainable model of economic growth that relies less on a cycle of bubble and bust, something that I've spoken about back home.

All right? Thank you, everybody. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 6:44 p.m. at the ExCeL centre. In his remarks, the President referred to Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner; Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom; President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia; President Hu Jintao of China; President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea; and King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia.

Message to the Senate Transmitting an Annex to the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty
April 2, 2009

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith Annex VI on Liability Arising From Environmental Emergencies to the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (Annex VI), adopted on June 14, 2005,

at the twenty-eighth Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting held in Stockholm, Sweden. I also transmit for the information of the Senate the report of the Department of State, which includes an Overview of Annex VI.

The Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty (the "Protocol") together with its Annexes I–IV, adopted at Madrid on October 4, 1991, and Annex V to the Protocol, adopted at Bonn on October 17, 1991, received the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification on October 7, 1992, and entered into force for the United States on January 14, 1998, and May 24, 2002, respectively.

In Article 16 of the Protocol, the Parties undertook to elaborate, in one or more Annexes, rules and procedures relating to liability for damage arising from activities taking place in the Antarctic Treaty area and covered by the Protocol. Annex VI sets forth rules and procedures relating to liability arising from the failure of operators in the Antarctic to respond to environmental emergencies.

I believe Annex VI to be fully in the U.S. interest. Its provisions advance the U.S. goals of protecting the environment of Antarctica, establishing incentives for Antarctic operators to act responsibly, and providing for the reimbursement of costs incurred by the United States Government when it responds to environmental emergencies caused by others.

As the report of the Department of State explains, Annex VI will require implementing legislation, which will be submitted separately to the Congress for its consideration.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to Annex VI and give its advice and consent to ratification.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
April 2, 2009.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 3.

The President's News Conference With President Nicolas Sarkozy of France in Strasbourg, France
April 3, 2009

President Sarkozy. Ladies and gentlemen, we apologize for this delay. While we have introduction, I will be very brief.

We have reviewed a certain number of issues—Afghanistan, NATO, Iran, Russia, Middle East—and I think—and I stand to be corrected by the U.S. President, but I think I can say that there is a total identity of views between us, convergence of views.

Insofar as I'm speaking just after the G–20 summit, I would like to say to Barack Obama just how delighted I've been to be able to work hand in hand with him. I want to tell him how much I appreciate his openmindedness and his clear determination to build a new world. And I can say that at this summit there have been no winners, there have been no losers. There were 20 leaders, of course, the leader of the world's number one power, the USA, who shouldered their responsibilities, squared up to their responsibilities, and that all goes well for the months and years to come. We have a hell of a lot of work ahead of us, because there's a hell of a lot of problems we need to deal with.

But for us this is a source of optimism to be able to work with an American administration that is clearly determined to listen to its friends and allies and to solve the problems, buckle down and solve the problems.

So, Barack, welcome to France. Thank you. And I really look forward to the weeks to come, because we're going to take a lot of initiatives; the world needs us to do so.

President Obama. Well, thank you so much for the extraordinary hospitality. And it is thrilling to be part of what is a true celebration: France, which is the United States oldest ally, our first ally, once again taking an extraordinary leadership role in NATO, thanks to the greatest leadership of President Sarkozy.

He's courageous on so many fronts, it's hard to keep up. And the energy that he has brought

to foreign affairs is something that I think we've all benefited from. So I'm grateful to his partnership. Had it not been for much of his leadership, I think what emerged from the summit would not have been as significant as it was.

On the issues that we discussed—whether it's Afghanistan, Iran, Russia—he is continually showing initiative, imagination, creativity in trying to solve problems that have been there for a very long time. And America is not only grateful for the friendship with France, but I personally am grateful to the friendship that we've developed, one that lasts before either of us—that actually developed before either of us were even elected to office. And it has only grown stronger since.

So this has been a very productive conversation. I look forward to further productive conversations this evening and tomorrow, surrounding NATO's mission. And I'm confident that when the United States and France are acting in concert, that the prospects for peace and prosperity around the world are strengthened.

With that, why don't we take a couple of questions? Do you want to go first?

President Sarkozy. Of course, I wish to welcome Mrs. Clinton and Mr. Kouchner.

France's Role in NATO

Q. Mr. President, you explained to the French that the return of France to the military and to greater structures of NATO would be offset by enhanced European defense. Have you got guarantees from President Obama, for instance, on the emergence of a planning—autonomous planning unit?

And, Mr. President, will you accept the idea of European pillar, a European caucus with NATO?

President Sarkozy. Well, you know, I've always been convinced that France and the United States belong to the same family. You know, we're in Strasbourg here. I am enamored of history, and I say to the French, never forget what American democracy did for us. On the 6th of June next, the two of us will be walking on the Normandy landing beaches in order to pay tribute to those young Americans who died—fought and died for us, who our children are the same age as they were.

Now, I don't need this kind of rapport with President Obama. I trust him. I don't need guarantees. I trust him, I trust his word, and I trust his intelligence. He doesn't need me in order to understand that a strong Europe, a strong Europe of defense, is the best guarantee for the U.S.A. President Obama's America doesn't want weak allies. They want strong allies who face up to their responsibilities. And we've been discussing this for a long time.

But this hasn't been a negotiation, a bargaining round. It—we have a shared vision of the world. We don't want to impose our values on anybody. But we don't want anybody, anywhere in the world to prevent us from believing in our principles.

And a word to the French. It's extraordinary, you know, for years now we've been sending soldiers to fight under the NATO flag, and yet we have not had anyone participating in those committees that actually lay down the strategy. Now, I wanted to be—I've shouldered the responsibility of my choices. NATO has been around for 60 years. And if there is peace and peace has prevailed, it is no coincidence; it is because we have worked together with our allies, and the first and foremost being the United States, who know perfectly well that France and other allies, this Europe of defense, it will comprise allies and friends, longstanding strong allies and friends.

President Obama. Now, let me just respond to your question very quickly.

NATO is the most successful alliance in modern history. And the basic premise of NATO was that Europe's security was the United States security and vice versa. That's its central tenet; that is a pillar of American foreign policy that has been unchanging over the last 60 years. It is something that I am here to affirm. And with France's reintegration into the highest command structures of NATO, that principle will continue to be upheld.

I want to echo what President Sarkozy just said. We want strong allies. We would like to see Europe have much more robust defense capabilities. That's not something we discourage. We're not looking to be the patron

of Europe. We're looking to be partners with Europe. And the more capable they are defensively, the more we can act in concert on the shared challenges that we face.

And so, you know, one of my messages to our NATO allies is going to be, the more capability we see here in Europe, the happier the United States will be, the more effective we will be in coordinating our activities. Okay?

Holly Bailey [Newsweek].

Guantanamo Bay Detainees

Q. Thank you so much. You mentioned earlier, President Sarkozy, talking about having strong allies that own up to responsibilities. You know, President Obama has vowed to close Guantanamo Bay in the next year or so. Would you be willing to take some of the prisoners from there?

And, President Obama, have you addressed this issue with him?

President Sarkozy. Well, there again, you know, I believe democracy makes it incumbent upon heads of state to speak the truth and to live up to what they say. I am a longstanding friend of the United States. But Guantanamo was not in keeping with U.S. values, at least with my perception of what American values were and are. And I was proud and happy that the United States should have taken the decision that we were hoping for, which was to close down that base; we all were, here in Europe.

My deeply held belief is that you don't combat terrorists with terrorist methods. You combat them with the methods and the weapons of democracy. Now, having said that—and I have said that—if then the President of the United States says, I'm going to close down Guantanamo, but I need my allies to take one, in this particular instance, this one person into our prisons, because this is going to help me, the U.S. President, to shut down this base, if we are consistent, then we say yes; otherwise we're inconsistent. We can't condemn the United States to have this camp and then simply wash our hands of the whole business when they close it down. That's not what being an ally, a friend, means, let alone standing up for what we believe in.

France's word is France's bond. We have conducted a line which is strong, honest, and in keeping with democracy, which is what our American friends are doing. Yes, we talked about it. And what I have said in my response is honest and consistent, and that's the way I wish you to see France, honest and consistent.

President Obama. President Sarkozy has been honest, has been consistent. I made the decision to close Guantanamo because I do not think it makes America safer. In doing so, I've been very clear that we're going to do it carefully; we're going to do it thoughtfully. And in order to do it carefully and thoughtfully, we are going to consult with our allies, and, in certain cases, we're going to need help with detainees that may still pose a risk but we may not be able to repatriate to their countries of origin.

And so we have had this discussion. We don't have detailed announcements to make. I just want to express my appreciation to President Sarkozy for being good to his word, as he always is.

Russia/Iran

Q. Christian Mallard. A question to both Presidents. Would you agree to have the Russians join European defense system? And are you expecting the Russians really to exert tough pressures upon Iran to stop their military nuclear program?

President Obama. Why don't I go first on this? I had a terrific meeting, a bilateral meeting, during the summit with President Medvedev. I think there is a great potential to improve U.S.-Russian relations. I think that it is important for NATO allies to engage Russia and to recognize that they have legitimate interests. In some cases we've got common interests, but we also have some core disagreements.

I think that we should be in a dialog with them about how we can maintain stability while respecting the autonomy and independence of all countries in Europe, west, east, central, wherever they are.

I was a critic of the Russian invasion of Georgia. I continue to believe that despite the extraordinary efforts of President Sarkozy to broker a cease-fire that we have not seen a stabilization of that situation. And I think that we have to send a very clear message to Russia that we

want to work with them, but that we can't go back to the old ways of doing business.

I do believe that the United States and Russia, the Europeans and the United States, all have an interest in preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, and that there should be a mechanism that respects Iran's sovereignty and allows them to develop peaceful nuclear energy, but draws a clear line that we cannot have a nuclear arms race in the Middle East.

I brought this up in my conversations with President Medvedev, and it will be an ongoing topic of our bilateral negotiations. We're very excited about working with France and other countries to arrive at a position with respect to Iran that invites them into responsible membership in the international community, but also makes clear that they've got to act in ways that responsible members—what's expected of them, that they meet those standards.

President Sarkozy. Very simply, I have always said to President Medvedev that the days of the USSR are over, that the Berlin Wall had come down, and that around Russia there were no satellite states any longer, and that he needed to respect that.

But by the same token, with the problems the world faces today, we're not going to reinvent the cold war. So it's excellent news, this proposal that President Obama has made to reengage with President Medvedev, to come up with new agreements between Russia and the United States. We don't need—the last thing we need is a new cold war. We need the world getting together; we need the world to unite. And we need Russia to shoulder its responsibilities—because it is a great country, a great power—to help us find a solution to the Iranian crisis.

So there again I think I can say that France and the United States are on the same—working on the same page. We are not against Russia. I mean, the Warsaw Pact is way behind us. We want to work with anyone who's prepared to work with us, very honestly, very openly, to have a security zone or area and, I hope very shortly between Europe and Russia, a common economic space.

Yes.

North Korea/Military Operations in Afghanistan/France's Role in Afghanistan

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. As you just said, you've tried to take a step forward this week with Russia in trying to take nuclear warheads out there and make it safer around the world. North Korea seems to be going in the other direction. Do you have a message or maybe even a warning to North Korea about what consequences they'll face if they go ahead with this missile test?

And, President Sarkozy, you spoke about honesty and consistency, and you're about to reenter NATO as a military partner. I wonder what you say to the President's message about bringing troops forward, maybe military training, helping in Afghanistan.

President Obama. We have made very clear to the North Koreans that their missile launch is provocative, it puts enormous strains on the six-party talks, and that they should stop the launch. The response so far from the North Koreans has been not just unhelpful, but has resorted to the sort of language that has led to North Korea's isolation in the international community for a very long time.

It is not just us that has said that North Korea should not launch. Japan, Korea, Russia, China, the other members of the six-party talks have all indicated that this launch should not go forward. And so should North Korea decide to take this action, we will work with all interested parties in the international community to take appropriate steps to let North Korea know that it can't threaten the safety and security of other countries with impunity.

Now, just one last thing I want to say. I think that France has already been a stalwart ally when it comes to Afghanistan. So we discussed the possibilities of all the NATO allies reengaging in a more effective mission in Afghanistan, which is military, diplomatic, deals with the development needs of both Pakistan and India. So it's not just a matter of more resources, it's also a matter of more effectively using the resources we have.

And on this, I think, once again, France and the United States are on the same page. But I just wanted to—before Nicolas answered the

question directed at him, I just wanted to publicly thank and praise France once again for its outstanding leadership when it comes to Afghanistan. I've not had to drag France kicking and screaming into Afghanistan, because France recognizes that having Al Qaida operate safe havens that can be used to launch attacks is a threat not just to the United States, but to Europe. In fact, it is probably more likely that Al Qaida would be able to launch a serious terrorist attack in Europe than in the United States because of proximity. And so this is not an American mission, this is a NATO mission, this is an international mission. And France has always understood that, and for that I am very grateful.

President Sarkozy. Well, we totally endorse and support America's new strategy in Afghanistan. And I want to say to my fellow Frenchmen that when New York was crucified, this could have happened in any other capital city of any democratic state. It wasn't New York that was being targeted, it was democracies at large. Now, either we as democracies stand by our allies in the face of extremists and terrorists and fanatics—and we will win. And that is what is at stake there. Secondly, this is something we talked about with President Obama, there will be no extra troops, French troops, because the decision to step up our troop presence was taken already last year. Thirdly, we are prepared to do more in terms of police, of the gendarmes, the military police, in terms of economic aid, in order to train Afghans and Afghanize Afghanistan. We are not waging a war against Afghanistan; we are helping Afghanistan rebuild. We don't support any given candidate; we support the right of young Afghans to look to a future, to have a future.

And on this, as on other matters, we sat down, we talked, I listened to President Obama, he listened to my problems and issues, and we tried to find solutions. That is exactly how we proceeded, that is how we intend to proceed. We will continue to work that way. And I would like to say all French men and women who are proud and happy that the President of the United States should be standing here in our country—and he'll be returning on the sixth of June—and that we will welcome him magnificently in this Normandy, where there are so many young men from your country who are buried.

But people must regain confidence. We are aware of the difficulties. We know what the difficulties are. We know that we need global responses, respond together to these issues. And it feels really good to be able to work with a U.S. President who wants to change the world and who understands that the world does not boil down to simply American frontiers and borders. And that is a hell of a good piece of news for 2009.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 1:15 p.m. at Palais Rohan. President Sarkozy referred to Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Bernard Kouchner of France. President Sarkozy and a reporter spoke in French, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session in Strasbourg
April 3, 2009

The President. Thank you so much. Good afternoon. *Bon apres-midi* and *guten tag.* It is a great honor for me to be here in Europe, to be here in Strasbourg. I want to make just a few acknowledgements. I want to thank the President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, for being such a terrific friend. I want to thank his wife, Madam Sarkozy. They just hosted us at the palace and could not have been more gracious.

I want to thank the Charge d'Affaires, Mark Pekala, and his wife Maria, who were helping to organize this; Vincent Carver, who's the

Counsel General in Strasbourg. And I want to thank the mayor of Strasbourg, Roland Ries, for his hospitality.

It is wonderful to be here with all of you and to have an opportunity not only to speak to you, but also to take some questions. You know, oftentimes during these foreign trips you see everything from behind a window, and what we thought was important was for me to have an opportunity to not only speak with you, but also to hear from you, because that's, ultimately, how we can learn about each other. But before I take some questions, I hope you don't mind me making a few remarks about my country and yours, the relationship between the United States and the relationship between Europe.

Strasbourg has been known throughout history as a city at the crossroads. Over thousands of years, you straddled many kingdoms and many cultures. Two rivers are joined here. Two religions have flourished in your churches. Three languages comprise an ancient oath that bears the city's name. You've served as a center of industry and commerce, a seat of government and education, where Goethe studied and Pasteur taught and Gutenberg imagined his printing press.

So it's fitting, because we find ourselves at a crossroads as well—all of us—for we've arrived at a moment where each nation and every citizen must choose at last how we respond to a world that has grown smaller and more connected than at any time in its existence.

We've known for a long time that the revolutions in communications and technology that took place in the 20th century would hold out enormous promise for the 21st century, the promise of broader prosperity and mobility, of new breakthroughs and discoveries that could help us lead richer and fuller lives. But the same forces that have brought us closer together have also given rise to new dangers that threaten to tear our world apart, dangers that cannot be contained by the nearest border or the furthest ocean.

Even with the cold war now over, the spread of nuclear weapons or the theft of nuclear material could lead to the extermination of any city on the planet. And this weekend in Prague, I will lay out an agenda to seek the goal of a world without nuclear weapons.

We also know that the pollution from cars in Boston or from factories in Beijing are melting the ice caps in the Arctic and that that will disrupt weather patterns everywhere. The terrorists who struck in London, in New York, plotted in distant caves and simple apartments much closer to your home. And the reckless speculation of bankers that has new fueled a global economic downturn that's inflicting pain on workers and families is happening everywhere all across the globe.

The economic crisis has proven the fact of our interdependence in the most visible way yet. Not more than a generation ago, it would have been difficult to imagine that the inability of somebody to pay for a house in Florida could contribute to the failure of the banking system in Iceland. Today, what's difficult to imagine is that we did not act sooner to shape our future.

Now, there's plenty of blame to go around for what has happened, and the United States certainly shares its—shares blame for what has happened. But every nation bears responsibility for what lies ahead, especially now. For whether it's the recession or climate change, or terrorism or drug trafficking, poverty or the proliferation of nuclear weapons, we have learned that without a doubt, there's no quarter of the globe that can wall itself off from the threats of the 21st century.

The one way forward, the only way forward, is through a common and persistent effort to combat fear and want wherever they exist. That is the challenge of our time, and we can not fail to meet it together.

Now, we take for granted the peace of a Europe that's united, but for centuries, Strasbourg has been attacked and occupied and claimed by the warring nations of this continent. Now, today in this city, the presence of the European Parliament and the Council of Europe stand as symbols of a Europe that is united, peaceful, and free.

Now, we take this peace and prosperity for granted, but this destination was not easily reached, nor was it predestined. The buildings that are now living monuments to European

union—unity were not drawn from simple blueprints. They were born out of the blood of the first half of the 20th century and the resolve of the second. Men and women had to have the imagination to see a better future and the courage to reach for it. Europeans and Americans had to have the sense of common purpose to join one another and the patience and the persistence to see a long twilight struggle through.

It was 61 years ago this April that a Marshall plan to rebuild Europe helped to deliver hope to a continent that had been decimated by war. Amid the ashes and the rubble that surrounded so many cities like this one, America joined with you in an unprecedented effort that secured a lasting prosperity not just in Europe, but around the world, on both sides of the Atlantic.

One year later, exactly 60 years ago tomorrow, we ensured our shared security when 12 of our nations signed a treaty in Washington that spelled out a simple agreement: An attack on one would be viewed as an attack on all. Without firing a single shot, this alliance would prevent the Iron Curtain from descending on the free nations of Western Europe. It would lead eventually to the crumbling of a wall in Berlin and the end of the Communist threat. Two decades later, with 28 member nations that stretched from the Baltic to the Mediterranean, NATO remains the strongest alliance that the world has ever known.

At the crossroads where we stand today, this shared history gives us hope, but it must not give us rest. This generation cannot stand still. We cannot be content merely to celebrate the achievements of the 20th century or enjoy the comforts of the 21st century. We must learn from the past to build on its success. We must renew our institutions, our alliances. We must seek the solutions to the challenges of this young century. This is our generation. This is our time. And I am confident that we can meet any challenge as long as we are together.

Now, such an effort is never easy. It's always harder to forge true partnerships and sturdy alliances than to act alone or to wait for the action of somebody else. It's more difficult to break down walls of division than to simply allow our differences to build and our resentments to fester. So we must be honest with ourselves. In recent years, we've allowed our alliance to drift. I know that there have been honest disagreements over policy, but we also know that there's something more that has crept into our relationship. In America, there's a failure to appreciate Europe's leading role in the world. Instead of celebrating your dynamic union and seeking to partner with you to meet common challenges, there have been times where America has shown arrogance and been dismissive, even derisive.

But in Europe, there is an anti-Americanism that is at once casual but can also be insidious. Instead of recognizing the good that America so often does in the world, there have been times where Europeans choose to blame America for much of what's bad. On both sides of the Atlantic, these attitudes have become all too common. They are not wise. They do not represent the truth. They threaten to widen the divide across the Atlantic and leave us both more isolated. They fail to acknowledge the fundamental truth that America cannot confront the challenges of this century alone, but that Europe cannot confront them without America.

So I've come to Europe this week to renew our partnership, one in which America listens and learns from our friends and allies, but where our friends and allies bear their share of the burden. Together, we must forge common solutions to our common problems.

So let me say this as clearly as I can: America is changing, but it cannot be America alone that changes. We are confronting the greatest economic crisis since World War II. The only way to confront this unprecedented crisis is through unprecedented coordination. Over the last few days, I believe that we have begun that effort.

The G–20 summit in London was a success of nations coming together, working out their differences, and moving boldly forward. All of us are moving aggressively to restore growth and lending. All of us have agreed to the most substantial overhaul of our international financial system in a generation. No one is exempt. No more will the world's financial players be able to make risky bets at the expense of ordinary people. Those days are over. We are ushering a new era of responsibility, and that is something we should all be proud of.

As we take these steps, we also affirm that we must not erect new barriers to commerce, that trade wars have no victors. We can't give up on open markets, even as we work to ensure that trade is both free and fair. We cannot forget how many millions that trade has lifted out of poverty and into the middle class. We can't forget that part of the freedom that our nations stood for throughout the cold war was the opportunity that comes from free enterprise and individual liberty.

I know it can be tempting to turn inward, and I understand how many people and nations have been left behind by the global economy. And that's why the United States is leading an effort to reach out to people around the world who are suffering to provide them immediate assistance and to extend support for food security that will help them lift themselves out of poverty.

All of us must join together in this effort, not just because it is right, but because by providing assistance to those countries most in need, we will provide new markets, we will drive the growth of the future that lifts all of us up. So it's not just charity; it's a matter of understanding that our fates are tied together, not just the fate of Europe and America, but the fate of the entire world.

And as we restore our common prosperity, we must stand up for our common security. As we meet here today, NATO is still embarked on its first mission overseas in Afghanistan, and my administration has just completed a review of our policy in that region. Now, I understand that this war has been long. Our allies have already contributed greatly to this endeavor. You've sent your sons and daughters to fight alongside ours, and we honor and respect their service and sacrifice.

And I also know that there's some who have asked questions about why are we still in Afghanistan? What does this mean? What's its purpose? Understand, we would not deploy our own troops if this mission was not indispensable to our common security. As President, I can tell you there's no decision more difficult, there's no duty more painful, than signing a letter to the family of somebody who has died in war.

So I understand that there is doubt about this war in Europe. There's doubt at times even in the United States. But know this: The United States of America did not choose to fight a war in Afghanistan. We were attacked by an Al Qaida network that killed thousands on American soil, including French and Germans. Along the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan, those terrorists are still plotting today. And they're—if there is another Al Qaida attack, it is just as likely, if not more, that it will be here in Europe, in a European city.

So I've made a commitment to Afghanistan, and I've asked our NATO partners for more civilian and military support and assistance. We do this with a clear purpose: to root out the terrorists who threaten all of us, to train the Afghan people to sustain their own security and to help them advance their own opportunity, and to quicken the day when our troops come home.

We have no interest in occupying Afghanistan. We have more than enough to do in rebuilding America. But this is a mission that tests whether nations can come together in common purpose on behalf of our common security. That's what we did together in the 20th century. And now we need an alliance that is even stronger than when it brought down a mighty wall in Berlin.

That's why we applaud France's decision to expand and deepen its participation in NATO, just as we support a strong European defense. That's why we welcome Croatia and Albania into the fold. And that is why we must ensure that NATO is equipped and capable of facing down the threats and challenges of this new age. This is one of our central tasks.

And we also know that in the 21st century, security is more complex than military power. This is the generation that must also stop the spread of the pollution that is slowly killing our planet, from shrinking coastlines and devastating storms to widespread misery of famine and drought. The effects of climate change are now in plain sight.

Europe has acted with a seriousness of purpose that this challenge demands. And in the last few months, I'm proud to say that America has begun to take unprecedented steps to

transform the way that we use energy. We've appointed a special envoy to help us lead a global effort to reduce the carbon that we send in the atmosphere.

But we all know that time is running out. And that means that America must do more. Europe must do more. China and India must do more. Rolling back the tide of a warming planet is a responsibility that we have to ourselves, to our children, and all of those who will inherit God's creation long after we are gone. So let us meet that responsibility together. I am confident that we can meet it. But we have to begin today. And let us resolve that when future generations look back on ours, they will be able to say that we did our part to make this world more peaceful.

It's perhaps the most difficult work of all to resolve age-old conflicts, to heal ancient hatreds, to dissolve the lines of suspicion between religions and cultures, and people who may not look like us or have the same faith that we do or come from the same place. But just because it's difficult does not make the work any less important. It does not absolve us from trying.

And to that end, America will sustain our effort to forge and secure a lasting peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians. I've sent a clear message to the leaders and peoples of Iran that while we have real differences, we also have mutual interests, and we seek new engagement based on mutual respect. And it is in that spirit that America and Europe must reach out to the vast majority of Muslims in our nations and in all nations who seek only hope of peace and partnership and the opportunity of a better life.

We cannot simply solve these conflicts militarily. We have to open our minds, and we have to open our hearts to the differences among us and the commonalities between us. With every threat that we face, a new day is possible. We can't get there alone. As it was in the darkest days after World War II, when a continent lay in ruins and an atomic cloud had settled over the world, we must make the journey together.

We know that transformational change is possible. We know this because of three reasons. First, because, for all our differences, there are certain values that bind us together and reveal our common humanity: the universal longing to live a life free from fear and free from want, a life marked by dignity and respect and simple justice.

Our two republics were founded in service of these ideals. In America, it is written into our founding documents as "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," in France, "*liberte*"—[*applause*]—absolutely—"*egalite*, *fraternite*." Our moral authority is derived from the fact that generations of our citizens have fought and bled to uphold these values in our nations and others.

And that's why we can never sacrifice them for expedience's sake. That's why I've ordered the closing of the detention center in Guantanamo Bay. That's why I can stand here today and say without equivocation or exception that the United States of America does not and will not torture.

The second way that we can turn challenge into opportunity is through our persistence in the face of difficulty. In an age of instant gratification, it's tempting to believe that every problem can and should be solved in a span of a week. When these problems aren't solved, we conclude that our efforts to solve them must have been in vain. But that's not how progress is made. Progress is slow. It comes in fits and starts, because we try and we fail, and then we try something else. And when there are setbacks and disappointments we keep going. We hold firm to our core values, and we hold firm to our faith in one another.

The third reason we know that we can change this world is because of men and women like the young people who are here today. Each time we find ourselves at a crossroads, paralyzed by worn debates and stale thinking, the old ways of doing things, a new generation rises up and shows the way forward. As Robert Kennedy once told a crowd of students in South Africa: "It is a revolutionary world that we live in, and thus, it is young people who must take the lead." Because young people are unburdened by the biases or prejudices of the past. That is a great privilege of youth. But it's also a tremendous responsibility because it is you who must, ultimately, decide what we do with this incredible moment in history.

We've just emerged from an era marked by irresponsibility, and it would be easy to choose the path of selfishness or apathy, of blame or division. But that is a danger that we cannot afford. The challenges are too great. It is a revolutionary world that we live in, and history shows us that we can do improbable, sometimes impossible things. We stand here in a city that used to stand at the center of European conflict, only now it is the center of European union. We did that together. Now we must not give up on one another. We must renew this relationship for a new generation, in a new century. We must hold firm to our common values, hold firm to our faith in one another. Together, I'm confident that we can achieve the promise of a new day. [*Applause*]

Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you very much. Please, everybody have a seat. So the way this works—do we have microphones in the audience? Yes? So just raise your hand if you want a question, and I will call on you. I think we have some translators. If you want to speak French or German, my French and German are terrible. But we have people who speak very good French and very good German who will translate your question and translate my answer. And I will try to get as many questions as I can get in, in the remaining 20 minutes or so that we have.

And I will start with this young lady right here. Yes, you, right there. [*Laughter*] Please introduce yourself. Hold on, I can't hear you yet. Can we increase the sound on the mike? Let's try again. There.

The President's Agenda

Q. Hi, Mr. President. My name is—[*inaudible*]—I'm originally from San Francisco, but I've been living—[*inaudible*]—in Germany.

The President. Oh, I called on—now, I just want to say I did not call on the American on purpose. [*Laughter*]

Q. [*Inaudible*]—in the first hundred days of your job. I would ask, Mr. President, if you would look forward and envision the future, and I would like to know what you envision your legacy or the legacy of your administration to be when your presidency is over.

The President. Well, after only 2 months, that's kind of a big question. [*Laughter*] But here's what I would like to see. And, look, you aim high knowing that you'll make mistakes and sometimes you'll fall short.

Number one, my first task is to restore the economy of the United States, but, in concert with other nations, to restore global economic growth. That's my number one task, because we are going through the worst crisis since the 1930s.

That means that not only do we have to fix the banking system, put commonsense regulations in place to prevent a crisis like this from ever happening again, making sure that we are keeping trade relationships between countries open, but it also means helping developing countries and poor countries who, through no fault of their own, have been devastated by this crisis, and if we allow them to collapse will, ultimately, be a drag on our ability to prosper.

Now, emerging markets have actually been the drivers of economic growth over the last several years. I mean, if we can get millions of Chinese to prosper, that is ultimately good for us. If we can get all the Indians in poverty to suddenly be able to buy a refrigerator or send their children to college that will raise everybody's living standards, because those will be enormous new markets for all of us.

So what I want to be able to do is not only fix the immediate crisis, but, working in partnership with other countries, create a path for sustainable, responsible growth. And I think we can do that. There are a lot of people who benefit from globalization, but there are also people who have been harmed by globalization. Globalization in and of itself can be good, but it can also be destructive.

If we create the right framework so that what happened in the banking system can't happen again, then globalization can be good for everybody and lift everybody's living standards up. And by the way, history has shown us that we are most vulnerable to war and conflict when people are desperate economically. And nobody knows that history more than Europe. So that would be number one.

Number two is I would like to be able to say that as a consequence of my work, that we drastically lessened the threat of not only terrorism but also nuclear terrorism. And we can't reduce the threat of a nuclear weapon going off unless those who possess the most nuclear weapons, the United States and Russia, take serious steps to actually reduce our stockpiles.

So we are going to—so we want to pursue that vigorously in the years ahead. And I had a excellent meeting with President Medvedev of Russia to get started that process of reducing our nuclear stockpiles, which will then give us greater moral authority to say to Iran, don't develop a nuclear weapon, to say to North Korea, don't proliferate nuclear weapons.

In my own country, what I think is very important is that we finally get a health care system that is reliable and cost-effective. That's something that—you know, that's a social safety net that exits in almost all of Europe that doesn't exist in the United States. You have millions of people who work hard every single day, but if they get sick they could potentially lose everything. And in a country as wealthy as ours, that's not acceptable to me.

So we are going to work hard to make sure that we have a health care system that won't be identical to what you have in Europe—each country has its own traditions and approaches—but that provides people quality, affordable, accessible health care.

And then, I would like to see us in the United States take the lead on a new approach to energy, because none of the developed countries are going to be able to sustain their growth if we don't start using energy differently, and the world cannot survive all countries using energy in the same ways that we use it.

I was meeting with the Indian Prime Minister yesterday after the summit—a very good and wise man, Prime Minister Singh—and he was talking about how Indian growth rates have gone up 9 percent every year. They need to grow at that pace in order to bring hundreds of millions of people in their country out of abject poverty, desperate poverty. Right? They have to grow at a rapid pace.

Now, he actually is committed to working towards dealing with the climate change issue, but he made a very simple point—which is a point that I understood before the meeting and all of us should not forget—and that is that you cannot expect poor countries, or relatively poor countries, to be partners with us on climate change if we are not taking the lead, given that our carbon footprint is many times more than theirs per capita. I mean, each one of us in the developed world, I don't care how environmentally conscious you are, how green you are—I'm sure there are some green folks here——

Audience member. Yes!

The President. Yes! I don't care how green you are, you are—you have a much bigger carbon footprint than the average Indian or the average person from China. And so we in developed countries then—it's critical for us to lead by example by becoming more energy efficient, and we also have to harness technology and shared scientific breakthroughs in order to find more sustainable energy patterns.

Now, I've got other things that I want to do, but that's a pretty long list. Let me go on to some—a few more questions.

All right, now, I know there's some other Americans in the crowd. But do me a favor, Americans, wait till we get back home, and I'll do a town hall there, because I want to hear from my French and German and European friends. All right? And—wait, wait, wait—this gentleman right here in the glasses.

Reducing Global Poverty

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. My name is Matthias Kutsch. I'm a student from Heidelberg, Germany, and—my mother tongue is German, but my French is not good enough, so I ask my question in English.

You mentioned in your speech that we are a lucky generation. We live in peace. We live in democracies and free states, and we really—we are very pleased to have this situation in Europe. But this is not the case all over the world, even not in Europe. Look to Belarus, for example, there's an autocratic regime.

And so my question concerns the many children all over the world that live in poverty, under human rights violations. They have hunger; they have no education and other problems. So

what is your strategy, Mr. President, to solve this problem?

President Obama. Good. Well, it's an excellent question, and the—first of all, I think one of the things that we should be very proud of from the G–20 summit yesterday was that we made a significant commitment to additional resources through the IMF and other mechanisms to provide assistance to emerging markets and poor countries that, as I said, are bearing the burden of a collapse in the financial system that they had nothing to do with.

The problem is so many of these countries had export-oriented markets, and when the economies contracted in our developing nations, it made them extremely vulnerable. You know, you have a country like Botswana, which is actually a well-managed country that has made enormous progress, but their main revenue generator is diamond sales, and they have literally seen the diamond market collapse, in part because they couldn't get trade financing, in part because the demand in developed countries has dropped off. So we've started to make progress there. Our most important task right now is helping them get through this crisis.

Over the long term, though, we've got to have a strategy that recognizes that the interest of the developed world in feeding the hungry, in educating children, that that's not just charity; it's in our interests. There's not a direct correlation between poverty and violence and conflict and terrorism. But I can tell you that if children have no education whatsoever, if young men are standing idle each and every day and feel completely detached and completely removed from the modern world, they are more likely—they are more susceptible to ideologies that appeal to violence and destruction.

If you have no health facilities whatsoever in countries in Africa, these days a pandemic can get on a plane and be in Strasbourg or New York City or Chicago overnight. So we better think about making sure that there are basic public health facilities and public health infrastructure in those countries, because we can't shield ourselves from these problems. So that means developed countries have to increase aid, but it also means that the countries who are receiving aid have to use it wisely.

And my father was from Kenya. And when I traveled to Kenya, I had just been elected to the United States Senate. Everybody was very excited, and they greeted me as if I was already a head of state. And there were people waving and lining the streets. I went to speak at a university, and I had to be honest, which was, America has an obligation to provide Kenya help on a whole range of issues, but if Kenya doesn't solve its own corruption problem, then Kenya will never grow; it will never be able to provide for its own.

And so there's nothing wrong with the developed nations insisting that we will increase our commitments, that we will design our aid programs more effectively, that we will open up our markets to trade from poor countries, but that we will also insist that there is good governance and rule of law and other critical factors in order to make these countries work.

We spend so much time talking about democracy, and obviously, we should be promoting democracy everywhere we can. But democracy, a well-functioning society that promotes liberty and equality and fraternity, a well-functioning society does not just depend on going to the ballot box. It also means that you're not going to be shaken down by police because the police aren't getting properly paid. It also means that if you want to start a business, you don't have to pay a bribe. I mean, there are a whole host of other factors that people need to recognize in building a civil society that allows a country to be successful. And hopefully, that will—that approach will be reflected not just in my administration's policies but in the policies that are pursued by international agencies around the world. Okay, good.

All right, right up—wait, I've got two of you, so you have to choose one. Which one should I call on? [*Laughter*] I don't want to—you're standing right next to each other. Oops. Well, I'm sorry, you know what, he actually called on the—no, no, no, I was actually pointing down here. I didn't see those two ladies back there. Here you go; this one right here. Go ahead.

The First Family's Dog/Building Sustainable Economies

Q. Well, hello, Mr. President. I'm sorry, I'm from Chicago, excuse me.

The President. Are you?

Q. I'm also a student in the high school—the international high school of Pontonniers.

The President. Well, no, I'm sorry, if you're American I can't—[*laughter*].

Q. I'm also French.

The President. Wait, wait, wait, wait, now, hold on. She said she's also French. What does that mean?

Q. Yes. Double nationality.

The President. Dual nationality. What do you think, should we let her ask the question? Okay, go ahead.

Q. Thank you. Do you think that the economic crisis is an opportunity to restructure our industries in an ecological and sustainable way? And I also was wondering whether the dog was already in the White House or not. [*Laughter*]

The President. The—we are getting a dog. This is a very important question in the United States—[*laughter*]—what kind of dog we're getting and when we're getting it. It should be there soon.

I do think that in crisis there's always opportunity if it's used properly. So for example, in the United States we decided to pass a large stimulus package to help growth at a time when the private sector was having a very bad—difficult time.

Now, we could have just spent the money on the same old ways of doing things, but part of what we've decided was, if we're going to be spending a lot of Government money anyway, why not spend it to double the amount of renewable energy? Why not spend it on retrofitting existing Government buildings so that we drastically reduce their energy consumption? Why not start building high-speed rail?

One thing that, as an American who is proud as anybody of my country, I am always jealous about European trains. And I said to myself, why can't we have high-speed rail? And so we're investing in that as well.

And so on the transportation front, on—with respect to building construction, on a whole range of issues, we are investing in new technologies that will make us more energy efficient. And that is one of the building blocks that's needed in order for us to reduce our carbon footprint and to work with other countries to achieve the climate change goals that I think are going to be so important.

I'm getting the signal that I've only got time for two more questions. Oh! I'm going to ask that young man in the suit, because he got dressed up today. I know he doesn't usually wear a suit. Yes, go ahead, go ahead.

Europe's Role in Military Operations in Afghanistan

Q. I just want to know what do you expect from the French and the European countries regarding the war on terror?

The President. Good. That's a good question. Look, I think that over the last 7, 8 years, as I said in my speech, a lot of tensions have developed between the United States and Europe. And one of the legacies, I hope, from my administration is, is that we start bringing our historic alliance back together in a much more effective way.

Now, that doesn't mean that we're not going to have honest disagreements. All countries have disagreements between themselves. But I think that we can work much more effectively and cooperatively and maintain that core trust that we have towards each other.

Nowhere have we seen more suspicion than around questions of war and peace and how we respond to terrorism. When 9/11 happened, Europe responded as a true friend would respond to the United States, saying, "We are all Americans." All of us have a stake in ensuring that innocent people who were just going about their business, going to work, suddenly find themselves slaughtered; all of us have an interest in preventing that kind of vicious, evil act.

But after the initial NATO engagement in Afghanistan, we got sidetracked by Iraq, and we have not fully recovered that initial insight that we have a mutual interest in ensuring that organizations like Al Qaida cannot operate. And I think that it is important for Europe to understand that even though I'm now President and George Bush is no longer President, Al Qaida is

still a threat, and that we cannot pretend somehow that because Barack Hussein Obama got elected as President, suddenly everything is going to be okay.

It is going to be a very difficult challenge. Al Qaida is still bent on carrying out terrorist activity. It is—don't fool yourselves—because some people say, "Well, you know, if we changed our policies with respect to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or if we were more respectful towards the Muslim world, suddenly these organizations would stop threatening us." That's just not the case.

It is true that we have to change our behavior in showing the Muslim world greater respect and changing our language and changing our tone. It is true that we have to work very hard for Israeli-Palestinian peace. But what is also true is that these organizations are willing to kill innocent people because of a twisted, distorted ideology. And we as democracies and as people who value human life can't allow those organizations to operate.

So here's the bottom line. The United States has reviewed and redesigned its approach to Afghanistan. We believe that we cannot just win militarily. We have to win through development aid. We have to win through increasing the capacity of the Afghan Government to provide basic services to its people and to uphold rule of law. We have to work with the Pakistani Government so that they are more trusted by their population and have more control so that they can then go—help us go after these terrorists. We have to encourage diplomacy in the region.

So it can't just be a military strategy, and we will be partnering with Europe on the development side and on the diplomatic side. But there will be a military component to it, and Europe should not simply expect the United States to shoulder that burden alone. We should not, because this is a joint problem, and it requires joint effort.

One last point I will make. In dealing with terrorism, we can't lose sight of our values and who we are. That's why I closed Guantanamo. That's why I made very clear that we will not engage in certain interrogation practices. I don't believe that there is a contradiction between our security and our values. And when you start sacrificing your values, when you lose yourself, then over the long term that will make you less secure. When we saw what happened in Abu Ghraib, that wasn't good for our security; that was a recruitment tool for terrorism. Humiliating people is never a good strategy to battle terrorism.

So we are going to conduct our operations in a way that reflect our best selves and make sure that we are proud. And that, in turn, will allow the Europeans, I think, to feel good about our joint efforts and also not to have excuses not to participate in those joint efforts. All right?

Okay, last question. All right, let me see here. All right, that young lady in the red right there, right there. She had all her friends helping her out.

The Presidency/Public Service

Q. Thank you. Hi, I'm Ines, also from Heidelberg, and I'm total European. [*Laughter*] And first of all, I wanted to tell you that your name in Hungarian means "peach," if you——

The President. Peach?

Q. Yes.

The President. Oh, okay. Well, how about that. I did not know that.

Q. Yes, now you know it. And we wanted to know if you—did you ever regret to have run for Presidency till now? I mean, well, did you ever ask yourself, am I sure to manage? Yes.

The President. Yes, it's a good question. Michelle definitely asked that question. [*Laughter*] You know, there are—there have been times, certainly, during the campaign, and there have been times over the last several months where you feel a lot of weight on your shoulders. There's no doubt about it.

During the campaign, the biggest sacrifice, the thing that was most difficult, was that I was away from my family all the time. In addition to missing—in addition to being jealous about high-speed rail and the nice trains here, I'm also jealous of the fact that campaigns here only last a few months, whereas in the United States we were running for 2 years. So I was away from home all the time, and that was very difficult because not only do I have a

wonderful wife, but I have two perfect daughters. And so, you know, I missed them a lot.

But the nice thing is now that I'm President, it turns out I have this really nice office in my house called the Oval Office, and so it only takes me a few seconds to get upstairs, and I'm home for dinner every night.

You also lose privacy and autonomy—or anonymity. You know, it's very frustrating now—it used to be when I came to Europe, that I could just wander down to a cafe and sit and have some wine and watch people go by and go into a little shop and watch the sun go down. Now I'm in hotel rooms all the time, and I have security around me all the time. And so just, you know, losing that ability to just take a walk, that is something that is frustrating.

But having said all that, I truly believe that there's nothing more noble than public service. Now, that doesn't mean that you have to run for President. That—[*applause*]. You know, you might work for Doctors Without Borders, or you might volunteer for an agency, or you might be somebody working for the United Nations, or you might be the mayor of Strasbourg. Right? I mean, they're all—you might volunteer in your own community.

But the point is that what I found at a very young age was that if you only think about yourself—how much money can I make, what can I buy, how nice is my house, what kind of fancy car do I have—that over the long term I think you get bored. I think your life becomes—I think if you're only thinking about yourself, your life becomes diminished, and that the way to live a full life is to think about, what can I do for others? How can I be a part of this larger project of making a better world?

Now, that could be something as simple as making—as the joy of taking care of your family and watching your children grow and succeed. But I think especially for the young people here, I hope you also consider other ways that you can serve, because the world has so many challenges right now; there's so many opportunities to make a difference. And it would be a tragedy if all of you who are so talented and energetic, if you let that go to waste, if you just stood back and watched the world pass you by.

Better to jump in, get involved. And it does mean that sometimes you'll get criticized, and sometimes you'll fail, and sometimes you'll be disappointed, but you'll have a great adventure, and at the end of your life, hopefully, you'll be able to look back and say, I made a difference.

All right. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:18 p.m. at the Rhenus Sports Arena. In his remarks, he referred to Carla Bruni-Sarkozy, wife of President Nicolas Sarkozy of France; and Todd Stern, U.S. Special Envoy for Climate Change.

The President's News Conference With Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany in Baden-Baden, Germany
April 3, 2009

Chancellor Merkel. Well, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to bid a very warm welcome to the President of the United States of America, Barack Obama. We already actually did it in front of the building. This time I welcome him to the south of Germany on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of NATO. And this is actually the first time that you visited the United States—oh, sorry, I mean, the Federal Republic of Germany. And we're very pleased, very pleased indeed, to be able to meet on this anniversary of NATO and to find a new format for this alliance.

In our talks we were saying again that we have long traditional ties of friendship that join our two countries. I'm certainly sure that we will be able to continue that over the next few years to come. We have actually talked about the whole broad area of complex issues that we need to contend with. We looked back on London, which we considered, both, to be a very successful meeting. The world has shown that it

is willing to cooperate. Last but not least, it was also a successful meeting because, clearly, the United States has shown that they are willing to cooperate, too, to show that spirit of cooperation.

I think that this is a common task, indeed, for us to shape also this alliance in this cooperative spirit, because this is a—this transatlantic relationship is also one that helps us to overcome the current financial and economic crisis.

The Federal Republic of Germany wants to give its contribution to overcoming international problems. We were dealing today with relations between Russia and the United States, how we can shape this future relationship between Europe and Russia and the United States. We will have the upcoming summit in Prague between the European Union and the United States.

We will also, we think, on the bilateral scene, be able to lend a contribution to solving the problems of Afghanistan. This is a big, a huge responsibility for all of us. We want to bear our burden of responsibility. We want to do something in order to train the Afghan National Forces, but also the police in Afghanistan.

We want to shape relations with Iran in such a way that a nuclear rearmament of Iran is simply made not possible, but that at the same time, we make it possible for the Iranian people to have a hopeful and prosperous future. We are very gratified to know that the United States wants to have a fresh beginning, a fresh start, in this relationship.

We also talked about the Middle East, where the peace process will have to be pursued in the sense and in the direction of a two-state solution. I think there is indeed a broad array of issues that we need to contend with. The Federal Republic of Germany stands ready to give its contribution towards solving them.

And we would like to bid you a very warm welcome, indeed. I think you've seen that the press was actually showing a great deal of welcome to you, and you saw the people along the way who were waiting for you for many hours with their little flags waving. And we're pleased to have you. Welcome. We hope to welcome you again soon.

President Obama. Thank you so much. It is wonderful to be here in Germany. And I want to thank Chancellor Merkel for her leadership, her friendship, and to say to all the German people that we are grateful to have such an extraordinary ally. And I think I speak on behalf of the American people that we consider the relationship between the United States and Germany to be one of our most important relationships. And I have been spending quite a bit of time lately with Chancellor Merkel and continue to be impressed with her wisdom and leadership and diligence in pursuing the interests of her people.

Over the last several days, what we've been grappling with is an economic crisis that is unlike anything we've seen since the thirties. And just a stark reminder for those of us in the United States: Our jobs report came out today, and it showed that we had lost 663,000 jobs just this month, which has pushed our unemployment rate to 8.5 percent, the highest in 25 years. And we've lost 5.1 million jobs since this financial crisis and recession began.

So obviously, this is hitting the United States hard. But I think what we discussed and the reason we acted swiftly and boldly in London is the fact that none of us can isolate ourselves from a global market; that the economies now are so interdependent, capital flows across borders occur in the blink of an eye, and as a consequence, if we do not have concerted action, then we will have collective failure.

I'm very proud of the work that was done in London. I think the fact that we have a regulatory framework that can prevent this crisis from happening again, the fact that we have taken, collectively, steps to not only encourage growth but also to make sure that we're helping emerging markets and poor countries deal with the consequences of this financial crisis, none of those things alone guarantee immediate recovery, but they are necessary foundations for recovery.

And because we committed to meeting again in the fall, it allows us to review what we've done. And if what we've done is not sufficient and we continue to see a deterioration

in the situation, then we're going to go back at it and keep on doing so until we get it right.

As Chancellor Merkel mentioned, the economy is just one of our challenges. And as we celebrate this important landmark for NATO, we are reminded that not only do we have immediate joint efforts in Afghanistan that have to be bolstered and have to become more effective, but we also have to have a strategic framework for how NATO moves forward.

This has been the most successful alliance in modern history, an alliance that was so effective that we never had to fight. And that kind of vision that was implemented, that kind of imagination has to be adapted to the 21st century challenges that we face; not just Afghanistan, but there are a whole host of other hot spots and challenges, and we've got to figure out what is NATO's role in that, what is the partnership between the United States and the European Union's role in that, whether it's an issue of climate change or poverty or trying to bring about peace in regions that have known conflict for a very long time. In all of these areas cooperation is going to be critical and leadership from our two countries is going to be critical.

So I'm very pleased to have a partner in Chancellor Merkel in these efforts, and I am confident that, moving forward, that we are going to be able to make slow and steady progress to advance the cause of peace and prosperity.

With that, why don't we take some questions?

Chancellor Merkel. Well, maybe we ought to start with the German side. Mr.—[*inaudible*]—please.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization/Military Operations in Afghanistan

Q. [*Inaudible*]—*Zweites Deutshes Fernsehen.* Mr. President, first of all, once again a warm welcome to Germany. You've had a very enthusiastic reception here in the streets of Baden-Baden by the people, but there is also fear and anxiety in Germany about what the future might bring. Your administration is calling for a fundamental reform of NATO, or perhaps in your words, change. What, Mr. President, is your personal grand design for the new NATO? Will it be the policeman of the world, the global one? Should Germany shoulder more responsibility, especially in Afghanistan?

One question for the Chancellor. Madam Chancellor, where do you see the limits of NATO, and where do you see the limits of German engagement in the world?

President Obama. I don't come bearing grand designs. I'm here to listen, to share ideas, and to jointly, as one of many NATO allies, to help shape our vision for the future.

If NATO becomes everything, then it's nothing. So obviously, we're going to have to define and clarify its roles, responsibilities for the 21st century. And what we should expect is that we will set up a process in order to do that. I don't think Germany should feel anxious about that. I think that the United States and Germany and all the other NATO countries should see this as an opportunity to put together an architecture that is as successful at meeting our new challenges as the prior architecture was at meeting the challenges of the cold war.

And obviously, we already have one test case, and that is in Afghanistan. It is as complex a problem as we're going to see, partly because it's not just a problem of Afghanistan, but it's also a problem that exists in Pakistan. We've put forward a new comprehensive review of how we think we should approach this that recognizes the military alone cannot solve these problems, that we have to have a significant military force, but that it has to be combined with a diplomatic effort and development effort that can stabilize the region, and it has to be focused on the true problem, which is violent extremists that can project attacks not just against the United States but also against Europe and worldwide.

I think that the strategy we put forward can, and will, be successful, but we've got to be disciplined, we've got to be coordinated, and we've got to execute. And Germany—I am—thanked Chancellor Merkel for the extraordinary efforts that have already been made by the German people both in terms of resources and troops. We do expect that all NATO partners are going to contribute to these efforts. They have thus far—the progress in some cases has been uneven, but I think that's not just a problem of lack of resources; it's also a problem of a strategy that was allowed to drift.

And so what we're going to do is refocus the strategy and then make sure that the resources are there to do it. And I'm confident that Germany, as one of the most important leaders in Europe, will be stepping up to the plate and working alongside us to get the job done.

Chancellor Merkel. Well, what is indeed gratifying to note is that the new approach of the new administration of the United States as regards Afghanistan is very much in step with what Germany is envisaging, this sort of "networked security," as we call it, or an integrated security where you have a civilian component of rebuilding, training, and last but not least, obviously, also the capacity of the Afghans to really defend themselves. That is, after all, what we were after with our mission to Afghanistan.

And now that brings me to NATO, protecting NATO member states from being attacked by other countries or by attacks coming and emanating from other country. Afghanistan as a failed state was a safe haven for terrorist groups, for Al Qaida, that actually allowed attacks against our alliance. And that is what we wanted to prevent with this mission in the first place for the future.

And we now come back to NATO. Article 5 is at the core of what NATO is all about—the NATO member states showing solidarity with each other, being all of them committed to securing not only their own security and safety, but also that of their allies. And coming from that, we now have new tasks in this world of today. We are growing. We are rising to that challenge. We need to rise also to the challenge that Afghanistan presents, and we have to succeed there. It will be a test case for the alliance.

We can see that in the southern Balkans. We have been quite successful. NATO has been successful as an alliance. If we look back over only a few years of time, we have made progress there, but it was always combined with a political process. And that is why I can't say that's where NATO stops, so these are the borders of NATO, because if there is an attack against a member country, we will have to be, all of us, called upon to show solidarity and to defend the other countries. So that we cannot say we won't do this or we won't do that. This is what we have set up to do and what we are ready to do.

President Obama. Jon Ward [Washington Times].

Global Economy/Trade

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I'm going to read my question; I hope that's not too much of a breach in protocol here. I have a question about surplus and deficit countries and trade imbalances. Mr. President, you said in London that the world may not be able to rely any longer on the U.S. as a "voracious consumer market." Did you talk with Chancellor Merkel about Germany's enormous trade surplus and its impact on the global economy going forward?

And, Madam Chancellor, some say that Wall Street—Wall Street's excess was fueled by easy money, supplied from surplus countries such as yourself, and another large bubble and bust is inevitable if Germany and China and others do not move closer to balance. What is your response to that?

President Obama. Well, Jon, I do think that even as we are trying to solve the immediate crisis we've got to learn some lessons from the previous years to figure out how do we avoid another crisis. And if you look at the U.S. economy, what we've seen is a series of bubbles and then busts, much of it having to do with huge flows of capital into speculative sectors of the economy.

Part of the problem that we saw was a lack of regulatory oversight, and so we're moving very aggressively on that front. And in the short term, my biggest concern is how do I just make sure that people get back to work? So our stimulus package, our efforts to stabilize the housing market, our efforts to remove the toxic assets from the banks so that banks start lending more effectively and businesses can open, people can get hired again, all that is focused on my top priority right now, which is making sure that we're no longer hemorrhaging jobs and we start creating jobs.

As we emerge from the crisis, though, we're going to have to take a look at how do we ensure—a term that Chancellor Merkel spoke

quite a bit about at the summit, and that is sustainable economic growth. And in order for growth to be sustainable, it can't be based on speculation. It can't be based on overheated financial markets or overheated housing markets or U.S. consumers maxing out on their credit cards or us sustaining nonstop deficit spending as far as the eye can see. So once we've stabilize the economy, we're going to have to start bringing these huge deficits that our government is running, we're going to have to start bringing those down.

Families are going to have to start making more prudent decisions about spending and increasing their savings rate. Businesses are going to be making investments, and we want to spur as much investment as possible, but the whole point is to move from a borrow-and-spend economy to a save-and-invest economy.

Now, the U.S. will remain the largest consumer market, and we are going to make sure that it's open. One of the principles that we very clearly affirmed in London was that protectionism is not the answer. It's not the Germans' fault that they make good products that the United States wants to buy. And we want to make sure that we're making good products that Germans want to buy. But if you look overall, there's probably going to need to be a rebalancing of who's spending, who's saving, what are the overall trade patterns.

And it, by the way, it doesn't just include developed economies like Germany and the United States; it also means we want to encourage emerging markets to consume more. If you start seeing China and India improve the living standards of its people, now those are huge markets where we can sell. And that's why the last few days that I've spent talking about the international economy relates directly to the jobs that are being lost in the United States.

I know this was a long answer, but it was a big question. The bottom line is that as long as the United States and Germany are keeping our open trading relationship, as long as our approach to currency is one that ensures fairness—which generally speaking, the relationship between the United States and European central banks has been very cooperative and very solid—as long as we have proper rules of the road and regulatory frameworks in place, then the key is to have friendly economic competition, the United States making the best products, making the best decisions, making the best investments, and Germany doing the same, and then all of us can do well together.

Chancellor Merkel. Well, we love competition. We love competition for the best possible products. And I don't think we're in such a bad position. And that is what drives us; that is what drives markets, economies to have good ideas, bright ideas that turn into good products that you can actually sell.

What we—what all of this is about, we need to combat this crisis. We need to fight it resolutely. And I think we've done something very good in London. We tried to lend a helping hand to those who are not strong enough to, out of their own resources, combat this crisis. And that we can do this, that we still have a certain leeway to do that, shows how strong our countries really are.

But we have to do whatever we can in order to prevent such a crisis from ever occurring again. And this is what I mean very seriously. I mean, this was a great disturbance. Ever since the thirties—we haven't said this without purpose—such a crisis hasn't occurred.

So we have to take a very clear look at whether the economy is actually driving our politics and politicians, or do politicians still have the power to shape global economics. And I think we have to regain the ground that we have lost. That was a very important step to prove this to our people. And this is something that we cannot do nationally; we can only do this together and in concert.

If you look at the Federal Republic of Germany, for example, we will have a tremendous demographic change, this is a superannuated society, people getting older. So can we actually afford to incur so much debt? Do we have in a few years time, really, the power to innovate? We are paying an enormous amount of interest on each and every cent that we spend, and at some point in time, if the burden of debt becomes too big, then we lose innovative power.

And standards, for example, that too is important for us. Is it really so—that is really

necessary, not losing sight of the future and innovation and research and development.

But we have to emerge from this crisis as quickly as possible, which is why we actually pursued this on two parallel tracks in London. And we have every interest in not only seeing our own country get back on its feet again, the United States getting back on its feet again, but the whole of the world—emerging countries, Africa, Latin American countries. And this is why we will offer to them our help so that this happens time and again.

We're grateful for the fact that each and every one around the table assured us that we will not resort to protectionist measures. That is something that we were at one about. And this only will make it possible, incidentally, to emerge from this crisis. The fact that this wasn't done in the thirties was one of the big mistakes that was made then, and that we don't want to repeat.

Mr. Busse, please.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization/NATO's Role in Pakistan

Q. Nikolas Busse from the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* newspaper. Madam Chancellor, tonight one of the issues on the agenda will be who is going to be the next NATO Secretary General. Now, after all the discussions, this debate raging around the Danish Prime Minister, and with the background that you want to decide this question tonight, will he not be in a way damaged as a candidate? How do you see this whole discussion, and how do you want to contend with its fallout?

Mr. President, one of the point—[*inaudible*]—the strategy in Afghanistan now is—and you put a lot of emphasis on this all the time—is to focus more on Pakistan. What does this mean in concrete terms for the Europeans and NATO? Do you see that there might be a military role for NATO in that, or what do you want the Europeans to do in Pakistan?

Chancellor Merkel. I am firmly convinced that we ought to be able tonight to appoint a new candidate for Secretary General, and our colleague, the Danish Prime Minister, in my mind, as I've said repeatedly in the past, would be an ideal and excellent candidate. We will try everything we can in order to persuade other partners that this is indeed the case. I don't think he's been damaged. I mean, NATO Secretary Generals are being appointed with unanimity among NATO members and somebody who reaps unanimous support. Really, in a democracy, that's the best thing you can get. I mean, when he becomes Secretary General, he will be a strong one. But that's something we need to discuss, and we need to leave, actually, in order to be able to make that possible.

President Obama. I think that was an indication that my answers have been too long. [*Laughter*]

Chancellor Merkel. No. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. So I'll make this one quick. No, my focus on Pakistan does not envision NATO troops activities in Pakistan. It does mean that U.S. and NATO partners have to work more effectively with Pakistan to enable them to root out the safe havens for extremists that pose not just a danger to us, but now pose an extraordinary danger to Pakistan.

That is going to be a very complex task. It's going to have a lot of facets to it. The more diplomatic resources that we bring to that, the more countries can assist Pakistan in its development efforts, the more effectively we can provide training for a different type of conflict than the one that Pakistan has traditionally prepared for, those are all areas where I think NATO can work together very effectively. And we need to—we can't, ultimately, I believe, be effective in Afghanistan if we have not addressed the problems across the border.

Last question. Hans Nichols [Bloomberg News].

Germany's Role in Afghanistan

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Earlier, a couple of hours ago, on the French side, you said that with France, you never had to drag them kicking and screaming in Afghanistan. I'm just curious if you have a similar problem with Germany under Chancellor Merkel, or you're sensing that Germany is more willing and more likely to contribute, or just as likely as France.

President Obama. Germany has been a stalwart NATO ally from the start of this conflict and has contributed troops, has contributed resources, and will continue to contribute troops and resources. You just heard Chancellor Merkel emphasize that at its core, what has made NATO so effective is the Article 5 principle that if one ally is attacked, then all allies come together to deal with the problem. That's been the unchanging element of NATO and, by the way, an element that I don't envision changing as a consequence of the strategic review that may take place. That's the essence of a successful alliance.

And so what I've said to Chancellor Merkel is the same thing I said to President Sarkozy and the same thing I'll say to all the NATO heads of state this evening, and that is that we have lost our focus in Afghanistan; now we have refocused. We have a strategy that, I think there's a broad consensus, brings all elements of our power to bear, and will allow us to succeed.

We will now all have to make additional efforts and sustained efforts in order to succeed, with the understanding that our ultimate goal is not to occupy Afghanistan and not to run Afghanistan, but rather to provide the Afghan Government the capacity to provide for its own security and ensure that it is not once again a safe haven for terrorists.

It will not be an easy task. And one of the changes in our approach is that we are going to insist on a consistent review of the progress that we're making. And if we discover that the approach we're taking is not effective and is not working, then we will change it.

And the one thing that I would say to the German people is the same thing that I would—I've said to the American people, which is, I understand that after a long campaign in Afghanistan, people can feel weary of war, even a war that is just. Nothing is harder than sending young men and women into harm's way. And nothing is more sobering as a leader than signing a letter of condolence to a family of somebody who has died in war. And so I understand why both Americans and Germans would be feeling a sense, particularly in the midst of economic crisis, of why are we still there. But I believe strongly, and I think that our NATO allies believe strongly, that we cannot allow a territory in which people who would kill our citizens with impunity can allow—can be permitted to operate.

So we've got a difficult job to do, but I am absolutely convinced that we can carry it out. And Germany is going to be a strong partner with the United States and other NATO allies in getting the job done.

All right? Thank you, everybody.

Chancellor Merkel. Dankeschon. Wir sehen uns weider.

Interpreter. Thank you and see you later.

President Obama. Dankeschon. My German is not as good as Chancellor Merkel's. [*Laughter*]

Chancellor Merkel. What a surprise, Mr. President. My English also not——

President Obama. No, your English is great.

Chancellor Merkel. ——as yours. [*Laughter*]

President Obama. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 5:30 p.m. at the Rathaus. In his remarks, the President referred to President Nicolas Sarkozy of France. Chancellor Merkel referred to Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen of Denmark, Secretary General-designate of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Chancellor Merkel and some reporters spoke in German, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Statement on Senate Passage of the Fiscal Year 2010 Budget
April 3, 2009

Tonight the Senate has joined the House of Representatives in taking an important step toward rebuilding our struggling economy. This budget resolution embraces our most fundamental priorities: an energy plan that will end our dependence on foreign oil and spur a new clean energy economy, an education system that will ensure our children will be able to compete in the economy of the 21st century, and health care reform that finally confronts the

back-breaking costs plaguing families, businesses, and government alike. And by making hard choices and challenging the old ways of doing business, we will cut in half the budget deficit we inherited within 4 years. With this vote comes an obligation to pursue our efforts to go through the budget line by line, searching for additional savings. Like the families we serve, we must cut the things we don't need to invest in those we do.

Statement on the Shooting in Binghamton, New York
April 3, 2009

Michelle and I were shocked and deeply saddened to learn about the act of senseless violence in Binghamton, NY, today. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the victims, their families, and the people of Binghamton. We don't yet know all the facts, but my administration is actively monitoring the situation, and the Vice President is in touch with Governor Paterson and local officials to track developments.

Remarks to the North Atlantic Council in Strasbourg, France
April 4, 2009

Thank you so much. I want to address my remarks directly to the delegation from Albania and Croatia and their leadership: Welcome to NATO. We are very excited about your participation. The Atlantic alliance is 60 years old, and it's a measure of our vitality that we are still welcoming new members.

I think it's important to point out that both Croatia and Albania have already done many significant things on behalf of the alliance, including the 140 Albanians and

Croatian troops who have served in Afghanistan. And I think that indicates the degree to which they will be strong contributors to the alliance.

To both countries, your large contributions—your proportionally large contributions to NATO's joint efforts show what a priority you've made this, and we are grateful for it. And we are proud to have you as allies.

Congratulations, as well, on the progress that you've made in difficult reforms that have brought you to this point. Both countries have achieved an extraordinary amount, and continuing along this path will help you bring—will help you become even closer to Euro-Atlantic integration.

I'd also like to note that as we welcome Albania and Croatia to NATO, this will not be the last time that we have such a celebration, and I look forward to the day when we can welcome Macedonia to the alliance. The door to membership will remain open for other countries that meet NATO's standards and can make a meaningful contribution to allied security.

Now, I would like to invite the Secretary General as well as the Presidents of Albania and Croatia to join me. We have the original treaty that has been archived in the United States, but we also have two duplicates that we would like to present to the Presidents of each country, so if you could join me at this table.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:49 a.m. at the Palais de la Musique et des Congres. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary General Jakob Gijsbert "Jaap" de Hoop Scheffer of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; President Bamir Topi of Albania; and President Stjepan Mesic of Croatia.

The President's Weekly Address
April 4, 2009

In this new century, we live in a world that's grown smaller and more interconnected than at any time in history. Threats to our Nation's security and economy can no longer be kept at bay by oceans or by borders drawn on maps. The terrorists who struck our country on 9/11 plotted in Hamburg, trained in Kandahar and Karachi, and threaten countries across the globe. Cars in Boston and Beijing are melting ice caps in the Arctic that disrupt weather patterns everywhere. The theft of nuclear material from the former Soviet Union could lead to the extermination of any city on Earth. And reckless speculation by bankers in New York and London has fueled a global recession that is inflicting pain on workers and families around the world and across America.

The challenges of our time threaten the peace and prosperity of every single nation, and no one nation can meet them alone. That's why it's sometimes necessary for a President to travel abroad in order to protect and strengthen our Nation here at home. That is what I have done this week.

I began my trip by attending a summit of the G–20—the countries that represent the world's largest economies—because we know that the success of America's economy is inextricably linked to that of the global economy. If people in other countries can't spend, that means they can't buy the goods we produce here in America, which means more lost jobs and more families hurting. Just yesterday, we learned that we lost hundreds of thousands more jobs last month, adding to the millions we've lost since this recession began. And if we continue to let banks and other financial institutions around the world act recklessly and irresponsibly, that affects institutions here at home as credit dries up, and people can't get loans to buy a home or car, to run a small business or pay for college.

Ultimately, the only way out of a recession that is global in scope is with a response that is global in coordination. That is why I'm pleased that after 2 days of careful negotiation, the G–20 nations have agreed on a series of unprecedented steps that I believe will be a turning point in our pursuit of a global economic recovery. All of us are now moving aggressively to get our banks lending again. All of us are working to spur growth and create jobs. And all of us have agreed on the most sweeping reform of our financial regulatory framework in a generation, reform that will help end the risky speculation and market abuses that have cost so many people so much.

I also met this past week with the leaders of China and Russia, working to forge constructive relationships to address issues of common concern, while being frank with each other about where we disagree. President Hu and I agreed that the link between China's economy and ours is of great mutual benefit, and we established a new strategic and economic dialog between the U.S. and China. President Medvedev and I discussed our shared commitment to a world without nuclear weapons, and we signed a declaration putting America and Russia on the path to a new treaty to further reduce our nuclear arsenals. Tomorrow I will lay out additional steps we must take to secure the world's loose nuclear materials and stop the spread of these deadly weapons.

Finally, I met yesterday with our NATO allies and asked them for additional civilian support and assistance for our efforts in Afghanistan. That is where Al Qaida trains, plots, and threatens to launch their next attack. That attack could occur in any nation, which means that every nation has a stake in ensuring that our mission in Afghanistan succeeds.

As we have worked this week to find common ground and strengthen our alliances, we have not solved all of our problems, and we have not agreed on every point or every issue in every meeting. But we have made real and unprecedented progress, and will continue to do so in the weeks and months ahead.

Because in the end, we recognize that no corner of the globe can wall itself off from the threats of the 21st century or from the needs and concerns of fellow nations. The only way forward is through shared and persistent efforts to combat fear and want wherever they exist.

That is the challenge of our time. And if we move forward with courage and resolve, I am confident that we will meet this challenge.

Thank you.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 9 a.m., e.d.t., on April 3 in the conference room onboard Air Force One for broadcast on April 4. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 3 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m., e.d.t., on April 4. Due to the 6-hour time difference, the address was released after the President's remarks to the North Atlantic Council and before his remarks with Prime Minister Konstandinos Karamanlis of Greece in Strasbourg, France.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Konstandinos Karamanlis of Greece in Strasbourg
April 4, 2009

President Obama. Well, listen, we're going to just make a very brief statement because, well, the meeting obviously was running late.

I am so pleased to have the opportunity to meet with the President [Prime Minister]* and reaffirm once again the extraordinary friendship between Greece and the United States.

We had the opportunity to celebrate Greek Independence Day in the White House. And it was a reminder for all of us that not only is the United States inspired by Greece, not only were our Founding Fathers inspired by the values of ancient Greece, but that Greek independence was also inspired by the United States. It gives you a sense of the fact that we have shared values, a shared belief in democracy and liberty, that we have struggled and fought for that democracy and liberty as fellow members of NATO. Now in the 21st century, we continue to fight on behalf of those issues shoulder to shoulder.

So I'm very grateful to the Greek community in the United States for being such a wonderful bridge to Greece. Our relationship is strong, but I'm confident that in the years to come, on a whole host of issues, from dealing with the economic crisis to dealing with terrorism to dealing with energy, that the United States and Greece will be critical partners in all these international efforts.

So I'm very proud to call the President [Prime Minister]* my friend and that the friendship between our two countries is very strong.

Prime Minister Karamanlis. Well, it is known that we have a very strong relationship between Greece and the United States. [*Inaudible*]—by those in the modern world which remain the core values: rule of law, democracy, freedom. And we share a very strong bilateral relationship and also close cooperation within the framework of the alliance.

As, President, you already mentioned, the Greek diaspora is a very strong link between the two countries—[*inaudible*]. And of course, we are looking forward to work closely with you to address all the problems our societies face.

President Obama. Wonderful. Okay, thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:40 p.m. at the Palais de la Musique et des Congres. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

* White House correction.

The President's News Conference in Strasbourg
April 4, 2009

The President. Good afternoon. We have just finished—well, not just finished—because I know there's been a little bit of a delay—we have finished what I consider to be a very productive meeting. I want to thank President Sarkozy and Chancellor Merkel for hosting us here in Strasbourg and Kehl. I should add that not only were they gracious hosts, but the commitments that they made with respect to Afghanistan indicate the seriousness of purpose with which they are approaching the NATO challenge and our mission in Afghanistan in particular.

I want to congratulate Prime Minister, and now Secretary General to be, Mr. Rasmussen He is an outstanding public servant, somebody with an extraordinary reputation, and I have confidence that he's the right man to help lead NATO during a period in which we are moving from a vision first created in the 20th century to a vision that responds to 21st century challenges.

I should point out that the election of Prime Minister Rasmussen was unanimous, but there was important efforts to make sure that everybody felt included. And I want to thank, in particular, Turkey for raising some concerns having to do with their security issues and their confidence that the new Secretary General would address them. So I congratulate all the parties concerned in arriving at a outstanding outcome.

The NATO was founded on the basis of a simple but solemn commitment: An attack on one is an attack on all. And from that foundation we've forged the strongest alliance in history, an alliance that is stronger because it is made up of free nations.

Sixty years ago, much of Europe was in rubble, and this continent was divided. Today, the cold war is over, and Europe is free. Former adversaries have reconciled. We've protected peace and security in the Balkans. Our alliance has more than doubled in size. There was nothing predestined about the success. It took decades of consistent effort, careful cooperation, and collective action. But while we celebrate NATO's achievements, we can't rest upon them. The 21st century has ushered in a new era of global threats. To meet these dangers, the alliance must renew and reform itself once more.

The United States came here to listen, to learn, and to lead, because all of us have a responsibility to do our parts. America can't meet our global challenges alone, nor can Europe meet them without America. I'm confident that the leaders who joined me here today share that view, and that we're moving forward with a sense of common purpose.

We made great progress. Albania and Croatia are now formally NATO members. We welcomed France's renewed commitment to the alliance's military structures. And we agreed to develop a new strategic concept, which will be critical in modernizing NATO so that it can meet the challenges of our time.

We need to strengthen our planning to protect all of our allies. And we need the capacity to meet new and unconventional challenges. We need to partner with other countries and international institutions, and we need a constructive relationship with Russia on issues of common concern.

Today I focused in particular on Afghanistan. NATO's mission there represents both the promise of its past and its purpose for the future. After 9/11, our allies declared the attacks on New York and Washington an attack on all. And together, we embarked on the first mission beyond Europe against an enemy that recognizes no borders or laws of war.

Seven years later, Al Qaida is active in the border regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan. These terrorists threaten every member of NATO. They've struck in both Europe and North America. They are plotting new attacks, and that's why my administration undertook a comprehensive review of our strategy. We listened carefully, and we consulted closely with our allies. And today I briefed them on the results and discussed how we might move forward together.

We start from a simple premise: For years, our efforts in Afghanistan have lacked the

resources needed to achieve our goals. And that's why the United States has recommitted itself to a clear and focused goal to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaida in Afghanistan and Pakistan and to prevent their return to either country in the future.

This effort cannot be America's alone. All of NATO understands that Al Qaida is a threat to all of us, and that this collective security effort must achieve its goals. And as a signal of that commitment, I am pleased that our NATO allies pledged their strong and unanimous support for our new strategy. Keep in mind, it was only just a week ago that we announced this new approach. But already, with Secretary Clinton's work at The Hague and with the success at today's summit, we've started to match real resources to achieve our goals.

We're leaving Strasbourg and Kehl with concrete commitments on NATO support. Our allies and partners have already agreed to provide approximately 5,000 troops and trainers to advance our new strategy as well as increased civilian assistance. To support critical elections for August 20th, NATO will fully resource our election support force to maximize security. And our allies have committed additional funds to an Afghan elections trust fund that will provide the necessary resources for free and fair elections.

To accelerate and enhance our training of Afghan security forces, a new NATO mission—a new NATO training mission will focus on high-level support for Afghan Army and training and mentoring for the Afghan police. And many of our allies and partners have also pledged support for a new trust fund to sustain Afghan National Army's going forward.

And to strengthen Afghan institutions and advance opportunity for the Afghan people, we are working with our NATO allies and partners to achieve substantial increases in nonmilitary assistance and to provide the kind of doctors, engineers, educators, and agricultural specialists that are needed to make a difference on the ground.

Now, we'll need more resources and a sustained effort to achieve our ultimate goals. But these commitments of troops, trainers, and civilians represent a strong downpayment on the future of our mission in Afghanistan and on the future of NATO. These are the new missions that NATO must take on in the 21st century, and these are the new capabilities that we need to succeed.

NATO was founded upon mutual responsibility to our common security. And today I'm confident that we took a substantial step forward in renewing our alliance to meet the challenges of our time.

And before I start taking questions, let me just note that while we were busy dealing with common securities issues here at the summit, we received news yesterday of an extraordinary tragedy back in the United States, where a lone gunman killed and injured multiple people. My administration is in communications with law enforcement officials, Federal, State, and local. We are monitoring the investigation. I am heartbroken for the families who survived this tragedy, and it just underscores the degree to which, in each of our countries, we have to guard against the kind of senseless violence that the tragedy represents.

So with that, let me start with Richard Wolf, USA Today.

Outcomes of the G–20 and NATO Summits

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I'm wondering if you can say that you got what you asked for here and also in London, because you didn't ask for everything you wanted. And what I mean by that is you didn't get a lot more combat troops here, and you didn't get direct government stimulus there.

The President. Well, first of all, I don't want to circle back and have a whole new press conference about the G–20 summit, since I answered some pretty extensive questions there. A week before the summit, 2 weeks before the summit, on multiple occasions, I indicated that the notion somehow that we were seeking to dictate to other countries their budgets and their approach to government spending was simply not accurate. What we said was that all of us have to take important steps to deal with economic growth.

We in the United States have taken appropriate actions to fill the huge hole in demand that had occurred as a consequence

of the financial crisis. We saw that other countries at the G–20, like China and Japan and Great Britain and France and Germany, had all similarly taken stimulus steps. And the most important thing in terms of stimulus that we wanted to see at the G–20 was a commitment that as we monitor what takes place, we assure that if what's been done is not adequate, then we reconvene to make sure that we're taking steps that are adequate to create jobs and regrow the economy.

With respect to what we wanted here in NATO, the first thing we wanted was consensus and unity around a refocused approach to Afghanistan. And because of careful consultation with our allies prior to releasing the results of our strategic review, we came here expecting consensus and were gratified to receive that consensus. You had NATO putting its stamp of approval on what I believe is a well-thought-out, hard-headed strategy and approach to Afghanistan, but also the need to deal with the interaction between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

This was not a pledging conference, and yet we already received the kinds of commitments that, historically, you don't see at a conference like this. And I think if you will talk to prior participants, they would tell you that what was pledged here today was significant.

Let me just review: We fully resourced the elections, 3,000 from allies and partners; 300 new paramilitary trainers and mentors for NATO training missions in Afghanistan; 70 NATO-embedded training teams to support expansion of the Afghan National Army; $100 million downpayment on the Afghan National Army trust fund; and civilian assistance of half a billion dollars.

That was at a summit that was designed to discuss strategy as opposed to attract pledges. And I think it's an indication of the fact that this alliance is committed to achieving the focused goals that we've set out in Afghanistan. I think that you're not going to see a division between allies in terms of how we approach the situation. I think our allies are encouraged by not only the consultation that we conducted prior to releasing our strategy, but also our commitment to continually reviewing the strategy to ensure that it works.

And what we anticipate is not only that we will see additional resources brought to bear on the strategy, but that also we will have established a baseline of honesty and clarity about our purpose so that it will be much more difficult for each of us in NATO to try to avoid or shirk the serious responsibilities that are involved in accomplishing our mission. Okay?

Peter Maer, CBS.

Afghanistan/Pakistan/Terrorism

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I've got a two-parter on this policy. I'm wondering if at any time in the course of the meeting or before, you asked for a commitment from NATO for combat troops in a war stance like the ones already there and the thousands of others that you're ordering.

And since you keep referring to this—and you have referred to it as an Afghanistan and Pakistan policy—and you said recently that you don't envision sending—you don't envision NATO troops being sent to Pakistan, what is the message to Pakistan and the terrorists who are hiding out there?

The President. Well, as I said, this was not a pledging conference. All the NATO allies have troops on the ground who are in harm's way. Our ISAF partners have troops on the ground in harm's way. They are making significant commitments despite having participated in what has turned out to be a very lengthy operation.

And so the whole point of the strategy was to get beyond this notion that somehow there is one kind of troop and one kind of way of accomplishing our mission in Afghanistan. The trainers that we're sending in are not—are no less important than those who are in the south in direct combat with the Taliban because if we can't achieve these other goals, then we will put more and more of a burden, an unsustainable burden, on those troops that are conducting direct combat operations. So the answer is, number one, all these allies have combat troops on the ground. Number two, part of our strategy is to make sure that we've got a much more comprehensive approach.

With respect to Pakistan, we want to bring all of our diplomatic and development skills to

bear on strengthening Pakistan in part because they have to have the capacity to take on Al Qaida within their borders, but also because to the extent that we strengthen Pakistan's ability to deliver goods and services and a better life for its people, then the less the contagion of extremism in that country or in the region is likely to spread.

And I informed our allies here today that we are going to, despite difficult budget circumstances, put more money into aid to Pakistan, conditioned on some concrete results in dealing with the terrorist threat. And we are going to be pushing our allies to participate, for example, in the donors forum for Pakistan that's going to be taking place.

Q. And the message to the terrorists, sir?

The President. We are going to keep on going until we get this job done. And they should be clear that we are unified. We are strong. They will not wear us down. We are going to complete our mission so that our people are safe.

Okay. Major [Major Garrett, FOX News].

Human Rights and Military Operations in Afghanistan

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, and good afternoon. I'd like to ask you about a law that's recently been passed in Afghanistan that affects the 10 percent of the Shi'a population there. A summary of it says it negates the need for sexual consent between married couples, tacitly approves child marriage, and restricts a woman's right to leave the home. The United Nations Development Fund for Women says this legalizes the rape of a wife by her husband. I'd like your assessment of this law, number one. Number two, will you condition future troop movements of the U.S. to Afghanistan on the basis of this law being redrafted or rewritten? And if not, sir, what about the character of this law ought to motivate U.S. forces to fight and possibly die in Afghanistan?

The President. Well, first of all, this was actually a topic of conversation among all the allies. And in our communication—communique, you will see that we specifically state that part of this comprehensive approach is encouraging the respect of human rights. I think this law is abhorrent. Certainly the views of the administration have been, and will be, communicated to the Karzai Government. And we think that it is very important for us to be sensitive to local culture, but we also think that there are certain basic principles that all nations should uphold, and respect for women and respect for their freedom and integrity is an important principle.

Now, I just want to remind people, though, why our troops are fighting, because I think the notion that you laid out, Major, was that our troops might be less motivated. Our troops are highly motivated to protect the United States, just as troops from NATO are highly motivated to protect their own individual countries and NATO allies collectively. So we want to do everything we can to encourage and promote rule of law, human rights, the education of women and girls in Afghanistan, economic development, infrastructure development, but I also want people to understand that the first reason we are there is to root out Al Qaida so that they cannot attack members of the alliance.

Now, I don't—those two things aren't contradictory; I think they're complementary. And that's what's reflected in the communique.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. We have stated very clearly that we object to this law. But I want everybody to understand that our focus is to defeat Al Qaida and ensure that they do not have safe havens from which they can launch attacks against the alliance.

Ed Luce from the Financial Times. Where's Ed? There he is.

U.S. Place in World Affairs

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. In the context of all the multilateral activity that's been going on this week—the G–20, here at NATO—and your evident enthusiasm for multilateral frameworks, to work through multilateral frameworks, could I ask you whether you subscribe, as many of your predecessors have, to the school of American exceptionalism that sees America as uniquely qualified to lead the world, or do you have a slightly different

philosophy? And if so, would you be able to elaborate on it?

The President. I believe in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism. I am enormously proud of my country and its role and history in the world. If you think about the site of this summit and what it means, I don't think America should be embarrassed to see evidence of the sacrifices of our troops, the enormous amount of resources that were put into Europe postwar, and our leadership in crafting an alliance that ultimately led to the unification of Europe. We should take great pride in that.

And if you think of our current situation, the United States remains the largest economy in the world. We have unmatched military capability. And I think that we have a core set of values that are enshrined in our Constitution, in our body of law, in our democratic practices, in our belief in free speech and equality that, though imperfect, are exceptional.

Now, the fact that I am very proud of my country and I think that we've got a whole lot to offer the world does not lessen my interest in recognizing the value and wonderful qualities of other countries, or recognizing that we're not always going to be right, or that other people may have good ideas, or that in order for us to work collectively, all parties have to compromise, and that includes us.

And so I see no contradiction between believing that America has a continued extraordinary role in leading the world towards peace and prosperity, and recognizing that that leadership is incumbent depends on our ability to create partnerships, because we create partnerships because we can't solve these problems alone.

Steve Thomma, McClatchy.

Troop Levels in Afghanistan

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Of the 3,000 troops that NATO committed to send to Afghanistan, I wanted to ask you, is that a net increase, or will some of them be replacements? And more importantly, how open-ended is that commitment? Will they stay past the election in August and into 2010 alongside U.S. troops?

The President. You know, the—keep in mind that this is not a ceiling for what we're achieving. Again, I just want to emphasize this was not a pledge conference. So what I prefer to do is to have Bob Gates or Mike Mullen or General McKiernan or others talk to you in detail about troop rotations, how various NATO contributions will be integrated into the various operations that are going to be taking place. But if you asked people who have been around these NATO summits, they will tell you that it is highly unusual to see the kinds of commitments that we saw today this early and this much unanimity in terms of what our strategy should be.

Everybody understands it's going to be hard. And part of why I think our strategy was received favorably was because we did not try to paper over the difficulties. And I think every leader who participated in the summit understands that these commitments place a strain on our populations at a time when we're already going through very difficult times.

We got jobs reports yesterday back home that 663,000 people have lost their jobs just last month. States are struggling. Families are struggling. Military families are going through all the strains and stresses of deployments, and although we're dealing with that issue successfully, thanks to some good planning by Secretary Gates and our drawdown in Iraq, this is still a strain both on our budgets and on our troops, who are performing brilliantly. And that's not unique to the United States; that's true for all the NATO allies.

But what I am deeply encouraged by is, I don't see any lessening of will to ensure that terrorist organizations cannot operate with impunity and continue to threaten devastating attacks on the United States, NATO members, and that I think is—that promises success over the long term.

Let me—I'm going to take just two more questions, and I'll—from non-Americans. You guys weren't even on my list, but I'm adding you on so that—and I want you—I want to make sure that the other world leaders treat my American colleagues well too, though. [*Laughter*] Did Sarkozy give you guys any questions? [*Laughter*] You see there? There's got to be

mutuality in the transatlantic relationship. [*Laughter*]

What's your name?

The President's Meetings With Foreign Leaders

Q. Sonja Sagmeister from a little country, Austria, from the Austrian television. Mr. President, you said you came here to learn and listen, so a quite personal question. What did you learn from your personal talk with the European leaders? And did this change in a certain way your views on Europe and its politics?

The President. It's an interesting question. I had already formed relationships with many of them. Some of them I had met when I traveled through Europe before my election. Some of them I had met because they came to Washington after the election. This is the first time I've been in a forum with so many of them at the same time.

I'm extraordinarily impressed by the quality of leadership. I am constantly reminded that although there are cultural differences that are important and that we have to be sensitive to, what we have in common between Europe and the United States so vastly exceeds any differences that we have, that we should not forget why we are allies, and we should be careful about some of the easy stereotypes that take place on both sides of the borders.

It was also interesting to see that political interaction in Europe is not that different from the United States Senate. There's a lot of—I don't know what the term is in Austrian—wheeling and dealing—and, you know, people are pursuing their interests, and everybody has their own particular issues and their own particular politics.

But I think it's a testimony to the success of the European Union, as well as NATO, that on very important issues, each leader seems to be able to rise above parochial interests in order to achieve common objectives. And I think that has accounted for some of the extraordinary success and prosperity of Europe over the last several years.

Yes, right back there.

The Balkans

Q. Dear Mr. President, I am Vladimir Lame from Albania, from Tirana Observer. Thanks for the approval of Albanian candidate to be member of NATO. But do you think this will bring peace and stability in Balkans, first of all? And the new American President will support Kosovo for membership in U.N. and for other countries to recognize this new state?

The President. Well, first of all, we are very proud of Albania and Croatia. And they made extraordinary efforts at reform in order to see this day come about, and so we're grateful for them.

With respect to the Balkans, I think that because of NATO actions, because of European assistance, because of a lot of hard work by the peoples themselves, we have seen a stabilizing of the situation. But some of those gains are fragile. And I am very concerned about the impact that the economic downturn may have on the ability of these various countries to stay focused on achieving peace and resolving differences through negotiations.

That's not unique to the Balkans. That's, I think, true around the world. One of the points that was made during the G–20 summit is that what starts as a financial crisis can move to a broader economic crisis, a social crisis, and eventually, a political crisis. And so we have to monitor that very carefully. We want to play a constructive role in that process. The first constructive role we can play is to help fix this economy. Obviously, we have a big role to play in doing that, and I was very pleased to see what happened with the G–20.

But we have a specific role in emerging markets in developing countries. And many of these Balkan States, we need to make sure that their economies are stabilized during this crisis period. I think that will help in the broader issues of political reconciliation.

Okay. Thank you, everybody. Appreciate it. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 4:32 p.m. at the Palais de la Musique et des Congres. In his remarks, the President referred to President Nicolas Sarkozy of France; Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; Prime

Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen of Denmark, Secretary General-designate of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan; and Gen. David D. McKiernan, USA, commander, NATO International Security Force, Afghanistan.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Vaclav Klaus and Prime Minister Mirek Topolanek of the Czech Republic in Prague, Czech Republic
April 5, 2009

Hello, everybody. It is—let me begin by thanking the President and First Lady for their extraordinary hospitality in this spectacular setting, in this beautiful city, in a country that is one of America's greatest friends. And I am thrilled to be in Prague, Michelle is thrilled to be in Prague. And everybody has been extraordinarily gracious. So the main message I have, first of all is, thank you for the friendship, for the cooperation, for the strategic partnership that exists between our two countries.

I do want to make a brief statement about some news that was made today. North Korea made a launch this morning that defies U.N. Security Council resolutions, that harms peace and stability for Northeast Asia. Secretary Clinton and Ambassador Rice have already begun reaching out to our friends and allies to coordinate ahead of the Security Council meeting that's been scheduled for this afternoon.

The launch only underscores the urgency of the agenda that I will be laying out in my speech later this morning. I call on North Korea to honor its commitment to abandon all nuclear weapons programs, to abide by recognized norms of international relations, and to work to promote peace and stability in Northeast Asia.

North Korea's development of a ballistic missile capability, regardless of the stated purpose of this launch, is aimed at providing it with the ability to threaten countries near and far with weapons of mass destruction. This action demands a response from the international community, including from the United Nations Security Council to demonstrate that its resolution cannot be defied with impunity.

Thank you very much. Again, I want to thank the President and First Lady and the entire Czech delegation for their extraordinary hospitality and the warm friendship between our two countries.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:16 a.m. at Prague Castle. In his remarks, he referred to Livia Klausova, wife of President Klaus; Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan E. Rice. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks in Prague
April 5, 2009

Thank you so much. Thank you for this wonderful welcome. Thank you to the people of Prague. Thank you to the people of the Czech Republic. Today I'm proud to stand here with you in the middle of this great city, in the center of Europe. And to paraphrase one of my predecessors, I am also proud to be the man who brought Michelle Obama to Prague.

To Mr. President, to Mr. Prime Minister, to all the dignitaries who are here, thank you for your extraordinary hospitality. And to the people of the Czech Republic, thank you for your friendship to the United States.

Now, I've learned over many years to appreciate the good company and the good humor of the Czech people in my hometown of Chicago. Behind me is a statue of a hero of the Czech people, Tomas Masaryk. In 1918, after America had pledged its support for Czech independence, Masaryk spoke to a crowd in Chicago that was estimated to be over 100,000. I don't think I can match his record—[*laughter*]—but I

am honored to follow his footsteps from Chicago to Prague.

For over a thousand years, Prague has set itself apart from any other city in any other place. You've known war and peace. You've seen empires rise and fall. You've led revolutions in the arts and science, in politics and in poetry. Through it all, the people of Prague have insisted on pursuing their own path and defining their own destiny. And this city—this golden city, which is both ancient and youthful—stands as a living monument to your unconquerable spirit.

When I was born, the world was divided, and our nations were faced with very different circumstances. Few people would have predicted that someone like me would one day become the President of the United States. Few people would have predicted that an American President would one day be permitted to speak to an audience like this in Prague. Few would have imagined that the Czech Republic would become a free nation, a member of NATO, a leader of a united Europe. Those ideas would have been dismissed as dreams.

We are here today because enough people ignored the voices who told them that the world could not change. We're here today because of the courage of those who stood up and took risks to say that freedom is a right for all people, no matter what side of a wall they live on, and no matter what they look like. We are here today because of the Prague Spring, because the simple and principled pursuit of liberty and opportunity shamed those who relied on the power of tanks and arms to put down the will of a people.

We are here today because 20 years ago, the people of this city took to the streets to claim the promise of a new day and the fundamental human rights that had been denied them for far too long. *Sametova Revoluce*—the Velvet Revolution taught us many things. It showed us that peaceful protest could shake the foundations of an empire and expose the emptiness of an ideology. It showed us that small countries can play a pivotal role in world events, and that young people can lead the way in overcoming old conflicts. And it proved that moral leadership is more powerful than any weapon.

That's why I'm speaking to you in the center of a Europe that is peaceful, united, and free, because ordinary people believed that divisions could be bridged, even when their leaders did not. They believed that walls could come down; that peace could prevail. We are here today because Americans and Czechs believed against all odds that today could be possible.

Now, we share this common history. But now this generation—our generation—cannot stand still. We too have a choice to make. As the world has become less divided, it has become more interconnected. And we've seen events move faster than our ability to control them—a global economy in crisis, a changing climate, the persistent dangers of old conflicts, new threats, and the spread of catastrophic weapons.

None of these challenges can be solved quickly or easily. But all of them demand that we listen to one another and work together; that we focus on our common interests, not on occasional differences; and that we reaffirm our shared values, which are stronger than any force that could drive us apart. That is the work that we must carry on. That is the work that I have come to Europe to begin.

To renew our prosperity, we need action coordinated across borders. That means investments to create new jobs. That means resisting the walls of protectionism that stand in the way of growth. That means a change in our financial system, with new rules to prevent abuse and future crisis.

And we have an obligation to our common prosperity and our common humanity to extend a hand to those emerging markets and impoverished people who are suffering the most, even though they may have had very little to do with financial crises, which is why we set aside over a trillion dollars for the International Monetary Fund earlier this week, to make sure that everybody receives some assistance.

Now, to protect our planet, now is the time to change the way that we use energy. Together, we must confront climate change by ending

the world's dependence on fossil fuels, by tapping the power of new sources of energy like the wind and sun, and calling upon all nations to do their part. And I pledge to you that in this global effort, the United States is now ready to lead.

To provide for our common security, we must strengthen our alliance. NATO was founded 60 years ago, after communism took over Czechoslovakia. That was when the free world learned too late that it could not afford division. So we came together to forge the strongest alliance that the world has ever known. And we should—stood shoulder to shoulder, year after year, decade after decade, until an Iron Curtain was lifted and freedom spread like flowing water.

This marks the 10th year of NATO membership for the Czech Republic. And I know that many times in the 20th century, decisions were made without you at the table. Great powers let you down or determined your destiny without your voice being heard. I am here to say that the United States will never turn its back on the people of this nation. We are bound by shared values, shared history—we are bound by shared values and shared history and the enduring promise of our alliance. NATO's Article 5 states it clearly: "An attack on one is an attack on all." That is a promise for our time and for all time.

The people of the Czech Republic kept that promise after America was attacked; thousands were killed on our soil, and NATO responded. NATO's mission in Afghanistan is fundamental to the safety of people on both sides of the Atlantic. We are targeting the same Al Qaida terrorists who have struck from New York to London and helping the Afghan people take responsibility for their future. We are demonstrating that free nations can make common cause on behalf of our common security. And I want you to know that we honor the sacrifices of the Czech people in this endeavor and mourn the loss of those you've lost.

But no alliance can afford to stand still. We must work together as NATO members so that we have contingency plans in place to deal with new threats, wherever they may come from. We must strengthen our cooperation with one another and with other nations and institutions around the world to confront dangers that recognize no borders. And we must pursue constructive relations with Russia on issues of common concern.

Now, one of those issues that I'll focus on today is fundamental to the security of our nations and to the peace of the world—that's the future of nuclear weapons in the 21st century. The existence of thousands of nuclear weapons is the most dangerous legacy of the cold war. No nuclear war was fought between the United States and the Soviet Union, but generations lived with the knowledge that their world could be erased in a single flash of light. Cities like Prague that existed for centuries, that embodied the beauty and the talent of so much of humanity, would have ceased to exist.

Today, the cold war has disappeared but thousands of those weapons have not. In a strange turn of history, the threat of global nuclear war has gone down, but the risk of a nuclear attack has gone up. More nations have acquired these weapons. Testing has continued. Black market trade in nuclear secrets and nuclear materials abound. The technology to build a bomb has spread. Terrorists are determined to buy, build, or steal one. Our efforts to contain these dangers are centered on a global nonproliferation regime, but as more people and nations break the rules, we could reach the point where the center cannot hold.

Now, understand, this matters to people everywhere. One nuclear weapon exploded in one city—be it New York or Moscow, Islamabad or Mumbai, Tokyo or Tel Aviv, Paris or Prague—could kill hundreds of thousands of people. And no matter where it happens, there is no end to what the consequences might be for our global safety, our security, our society, our economy, to our ultimate survival.

Some argue that the spread of these weapons cannot be stopped, cannot be checked; that we are destined to live in a world where more nations and more people possess the ultimate tools of destruction. Such fatalism is a deadly adversary, for if we believe that the spread of nuclear weapons is inevitable, then in some way we are admitting to ourselves that the use of nuclear weapons is inevitable.

Now, just as we stood for freedom in the 20th century, we must stand together for the right of people everywhere to live free from fear in the 21st century. And as nuclear power—as a nuclear power, as the only nuclear power to have used a nuclear weapon, the United States has a moral responsibility to act. We cannot succeed in this endeavor alone, but we can lead it; we can start it.

So today I state clearly and with conviction America's commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons. I'm not naive. This goal will not be reached quickly, perhaps not in my lifetime. It will take patience and persistence. But now we too must ignore the voices who tell us that the world cannot change. We have to insist, "Yes we can."

Now, let me describe to you the trajectory we need to be on. First, the United States will take concrete steps towards a world without nuclear weapons. To put an end to cold war thinking, we will reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy and urge others to do the same. Make no mistake, as long as these weapons exist, the United States will maintain a safe, secure, and effective arsenal to deter any adversary and guarantee that defense to our allies, including the Czech Republic. But we will begin the work of reducing our arsenal.

To reduce our warheads and stockpiles, we will negotiate a new Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with the Russians this year. President Medvedev and I began this process in London and will seek a new agreement by the end of this year that is legally binding and sufficiently bold. And this will set the stage for further cuts, and we will seek to include all nuclear weapons states in this endeavor.

To achieve a global ban on nuclear testing, my administration will immediately and aggressively pursue U.S. ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. After more than five decades of talks, it is time for the testing of nuclear weapons to finally be banned.

And to cut off the building blocks needed for a bomb, the United States will seek a new treaty that verifiably ends the production of fissile materials intended for use in state nuclear weapons. If we are serious about stopping the spread of these weapons, then we should put an end to the dedicated production of weapons-grade materials that create them. That's the first step.

Second, together we will strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as a basis for cooperation. The basic bargain is sound. Countries with nuclear weapons will move towards disarmament, countries without nuclear weapons will not acquire them, and all countries can access peaceful nuclear energy. To strengthen the treaty, we should embrace several principles. We need more resources and authority to strengthen international inspections. We need real and immediate consequences for countries caught breaking the rules or trying to leave the treaty without cause.

And we should build a new framework for civil nuclear cooperation, including an international fuel bank, so that countries can access peaceful power without increasing the risks of proliferation. That must be the right of every nation that renounces nuclear weapons, especially developing countries embarking on peaceful programs. And no approach will succeed if it's based on the denial of rights to nations that play by the rules. We must harness the power of nuclear energy on behalf of our efforts to combat climate change and to advance peace opportunity for all people.

But we go forward with no illusions. Some countries will break the rules. That's why we need a structure in place that ensures when any nation does, they will face consequences. Just this morning we were reminded again of why we need a new and more rigorous approach to address this threat. North Korea broke the rules once again by testing a rocket that could be used for long-range missiles. This provocation underscores the need for action, not just this afternoon at the U.N. Security Council, but in our determination to prevent the spread of these weapons.

Rules must be binding. Violations must be punished. Words must mean something. The world must stand together to prevent the spread of these weapons. Now is the time for a strong international response, and North

Korea must know that the path to security and respect will never come through threats and illegal weapons. All nations must come together to build a stronger, global regime. And that's why we must stand shoulder to shoulder to pressure the North Koreans to change course.

Iran has yet to build a nuclear weapon. My administration will seek engagement with Iran based on mutual interests and mutual respect. We believe in dialog, but in that dialog we will present a clear choice. We want Iran to take its rightful place in the community of nations, politically and economically. We will support Iran's right to peaceful nuclear energy with rigorous inspections. That's a path that the Islamic Republic can take. Or the Government can choose increased isolation, international pressure, and a potential nuclear arms race in the region that will increase insecurity for all.

So let me be clear: Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile activity poses a real threat, not just to the United States, but to Iran's neighbors and our allies. The Czech Republic and Poland have been courageous in agreeing to host a defense against these missiles. As long as the threat from Iran persists, we will go forward with a missile defense system that is cost-effective and proven. If the Iranian threat is eliminated, we will have a stronger basis for security and the driving force for missile defense construction in Europe will be removed.

So finally, we must ensure that terrorists never acquire a nuclear weapon. This is the most immediate and extreme threat to global security. One terrorist with one nuclear weapon could unleash massive destruction. Al Qaida has said it seeks a bomb and that it would have no problem with using it. And we know that there is unsecured nuclear material across the globe. To protect our people, we must act with a sense of purpose without delay. So today I am announcing a new international effort to secure all vulnerable nuclear material around the world within 4 years. We will set new standards, expand our cooperation with Russia, pursue new partnerships to lock down these sensitive materials.

We must also build on our efforts to break up black markets, detect and intercept materials in transit, and use financial tools to disrupt this dangerous trade. Because this threat will be lasting, we should come together to turn efforts such as the Proliferation Security Initiative and the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism into durable international institutions. And we should start by having a global summit on nuclear security that the United States will host within the next year.

Now, I know that there are some who will question whether we can act on such a broad agenda. There are those who doubt whether true international cooperation is possible, given inevitable differences among nations. And there are those who hear talk of a world without nuclear weapons and doubt whether it's worth setting a goal that seems impossible to achieve.

But make no mistake: We know where that road leads. When nations and peoples allow themselves to be defined by their differences, the gulf between them widens. When we fail to pursue peace, then it stays forever beyond our grasp. We know the path when we choose fear over hope. To denounce or shrug off a call for cooperation is an easy but also a cowardly thing to do. That's how wars begin. That's where human progress ends.

There is violence and injustice in our world that must be confronted. We must confront it not by splitting apart but by standing together as free nations, as free people. I know that a call to arms can stir the souls of men and women more than a call to lay them down. But that is why the voices for peace and progress must be raised together.

Those are the voices that still echo through the streets of Prague. Those are the ghosts of 1968. Those were the joyful sounds of the Velvet Revolution. Those were the Czechs who helped bring down a nuclear-armed empire without firing a shot.

Human destiny will be what we make of it. And here in Prague, let us honor our past by reaching for a better future. Let us bridge our divisions, build upon our hopes, accept our responsibility to leave this world more prosperous and more peaceful than we found it. Together we can do it.

Thank you very much. Thank you, Prague.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:21 a.m. in Hradcany Square. In his remarks, he referred to President Vaclav Klaus and Prime Minister Mirek Topolanek of the Czech Republic; and President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia.

Exchange With Reporters in Prague
April 5, 2009

The President. Hello, everybody. I hope you're not tired of me by now.

Q. Sir, what's your message for North Korea, please?

Situation in North Korea

The President. We delivered it today. They, I think, have taken a provocative action. It creates instability in their region, around the world. If they want to take an appropriate path to rejoin the international community and break out of their isolation, that's available to them. That's not the path they're taking right now. And we intend to work with the international community to deliver a strong message.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:39 a.m. at the Prague Congress Center. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero of Spain in Prague
April 5, 2009

I just want to say that I've very much enjoyed working with Mr. Zapatero over the last several days. He is somebody who clearly understands not only Spain's extraordinary influence in the world, but also takes those responsibilities very seriously. And I think that we're going to be able to establish what is already a strong relationship between the two countries. I think we can make it even stronger. So I'm glad to call him a friend, and I welcome our opportunities to cooperate on a whole host of issues in the years to come.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:11 p.m. in the Prague Congress Center. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Lech Kaczynski and Prime Minister Donald Tusk of Poland in Prague
April 5, 2009

Let me just say very briefly that the relationship between the United States and Poland is one of the strongest in the world. It's based not only on shared values, but also on the fact that, just to give you an example, in Chicago, my friends from Poland and the contribution they've made to our city is part of what makes America. So we have benefited from Polish culture and the Polish people and the outstanding Polish character.

And so it is a great pleasure to meet with these outstanding leaders. We're looking forward to continuing some of the conversations that we've been having both in the EU summit as well as in earlier meetings in NATO. And I'm confident that on issues ranging from security to energy to economics, that by working together, we're going to be able to make both our countries more prosperous and more peaceful for future generations.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:12 p.m. in the Prague Congress Center. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Former President Vaclav Havel of the Czech Republic in Prague
April 5, 2009

President Obama. I just want to say very briefly before this brief visit that I was a fan of Mr. Havel's writings even before he ended up leading, or helping to lead the liberation of this extraordinary country. And so for me to be able to spend some time with him and draw inspiration from him is something that I very much appreciate, and it's a great way to cap off my visit not just to the Czech Republic, but also my visit to Europe.

Former President Havel. I'm grateful to the President that he found time in his busy schedule to receive me. And I'm his big admirer, and I'm really glad that we could meet.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:47 p.m. at the Prague Congress Center. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the Situation in North Korea
April 5, 2009

North Korea's development and proliferation of ballistic missile technology pose a threat to the Northeast Asian region and to international peace and security. The launch today of a Taepodong-2 missile was a clear violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1718, which expressly prohibits North Korea from conducting ballistic missile-related activities of any kind. With this provocative act, North Korea has ignored its international obligations, rejected unequivocal calls for restraint, and further isolated itself from the community of nations.

We will immediately consult with our allies in the region, including Japan and the Republic of Korea and members of the U.N. Security Council, to bring this matter before the Council. I urge North Korea to abide fully by the resolutions of the U.N. Security Council and to refrain from further provocative actions.

Preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery is a high priority for my administration. The United States is fully committed to maintaining security and stability in Northeast Asia, and we will continue working for the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula through the six-party talks. The six-party talks provide the forum for achieving denuclearization, reducing tensions, and for resolving other issues of concern between North Korea, its four neighbors, and the United States. North Korea has a pathway to acceptance in the international community, but it will not find that acceptance unless it abandons its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and abides by its international obligations and commitments.

Joint Statement by the United States and the European Council on the North Korean Launch
April 5, 2009

The launch of a missile by North Korea defies UN Security Council resolutions and harms peace and stability in northeast Asia. We call on North Korea to honor its commitment to abandon all nuclear weapons programs, to abide by recognized norms of international relations, and

to work to promote peace and stability in northeast Asia. North Korea's development of a ballistic missile capability, regardless of the stated purpose of this launch, is aimed at providing it with the ability to threaten countries near and far with weapons of mass destruction. This action demands a response from the international community, including from the UN Security Council to demonstrate that its resolutions cannot be defied with impunity.

The United States and the European Union stand ready to work with others in welcoming into the international community a North Korea that abandons its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and policy of threats aimed at its neighbors and that protects the rights of its people. Such a North Korea could share in the prosperity and development that the remainder of northeast Asia has achieved in recent years. North Korea, however, cannot realize either international acceptance or economic development linked to the international system until it ceases its threatening behavior and works with the other parties to implement the September 19, 2005 Six-Party Joint Statement.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

The President's News Conference With President Abdullah Gul of Turkey in Ankara, Turkey
April 6, 2009

President Gul. We are very pleased to host the President of the United States, Mr. Barack Obama, in Turkey. It would not be wrong to say that our discussions began in Strasbourg, and the discussions that we began in Strasbourg, we continued with them today, both during our meeting and then over lunch, and it was very beneficial.

At the outset of my remarks, I would like to say that we heard that there's been an earthquake in Italy. We just heard. And I would like to express my condolences to the people who lost their lives. We share the sorrow of the Italian people.

We are very appreciative of the fact that Mr. Obama, having been elected President, made Turkey one of his stops in his first overseas visit, and we have been very happy with that; the Turkish people have been very happy with that.

We have had opportunity to review the strategic dimension of our relations. Most of our relations seem to be on a military and political dimension, but we are also determined to move forward on the economic dimension of our relations. On the area of technology, we'll continue to support development of economic and technology cooperation. These are areas which we place importance on.

In—we look at Turkish-American issues, we see that the United States is very much interested, and must be interested, in important issues around the world as a superpower. And Turkey is an important country in her region, and Turkey is very much interested in many subjects. So if we were to make two separate lists of the issues that our countries are interested in, we would see that they are very much alike. And so I'm very pleased to say that Turkey and the United States have great understanding for each other and they work in cooperation with each other.

Of course, fighting against terrorism is one of the most important issues for both of the countries, and the cooperation that we've had so far will be further developed. And in many geographies, from Afghanistan to the Caucuses to the Balkans to the Middle East, we are working together, and we are determined to continue to work together. And the President has also shown great interest to Turkey's relations with the European Union. We appreciate that very much. We thank him very much for his words in that regard.

I think that this visit has been very beneficial. I'd like to welcome the President once again and wish him success.

Please.

President Obama. Well, thank you very much. And, President Gul, you could not be a better host, and we are grateful to you and your team as well as all the people of Turkey for the extraordinary hospitality that you've extended to us.

As you mentioned, we just heard the news of the earthquake in Italy, and we want to send out condolences to the families there and hope that we are able to get the rescue teams in and that we can minimize the damage as much as possible moving forward.

I have now spent a week traveling through Europe. And I've been asked, "Are you trying to make a statement by ending this weeklong trip in Turkey?" And the answer is, yes, I am trying to make a statement. I'm trying to make a statement about the importance of Turkey not just to the United States but to the world. This is a country that has been often said lies at the crossroads between East and West. It's a country that possesses an extraordinarily rich heritage, but also represents a blend of those ancient traditions with a modern nation state that respects democracy, respects rule of law, and is striving towards a modern economy.

It is a member of NATO, and it is also a majority Muslim nation, unique in that position, and so, as a consequence, has insights into a whole host of regional and strategic challenges that we may face. And I've been extraordinarily impressed with President Gul and the quality of his leadership, as well as Prime Minister Erdogan, and so as a consequence, I am excited about the prospects of us working together.

As the President noted, we had a wide-ranging conversation. We thanked Turkey for its outstanding work in Afghanistan, and we discussed our strategic review. We have a similar perspective in terms of how to move forward, and Turkey's contributions to ISAF and the overarching effort is going to be critical. We discussed the progress that's been made in Iraq and how we can continue to build on that progress as the U.S. begins to draw down its troops.

We talked about Middle East peace and how that can be achieved. And we discussed the need—a shared view for us to reduce the threat of nuclear proliferation not just in the region but around the world. And as President Gul noted, we also talked about business and commerce, because all too often the U.S.-Turkish relationship has been characterized just by military issues, and yet there's enormous possibilities for us to grow the economy and to make sure that trade between our countries and commerce and the lines of communication between our two countries continually strengthen, because we think that that's going to be good for Turkey, but it's also going to be good for the United States.

So we also discussed the issue of terrorism more broadly. And I reiterated my support to make sure that we are supporting Turkey in dealing with terrorist threats that may—they may experience. So overall it was an extremely productive meeting, and it gives me confidence that, moving forward, not only are we going to be able to improve our bilateral relations, but as we work together, we're going to be able to, I think, shape a set of strategies that can bridge the divide between the Muslim world and the West that can make us more prosperous and more secure. And so I'm proud that the United States is a partner with Turkey, and we want to build on that partnership in the years to come.

President Gul. Thank you.

President Obama. Thank you. Okay. We were going to call on one——

President Gul. One and one, yes. Sorry.

President Obama. Do you want me to start or you?

President Gul. You can start, yes.

President Obama. Christy Parsons, Chicago Tribune—hometown newspaper.

Armenia and Turkey

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. As a U.S. Senator you stood with the Armenian American community in calling for Turkey's acknowledgement of the Armenian genocide, and you also supported the passage of the Armenian genocide resolution. You said, as President you would recognize the genocide. And my question for you is, have you changed your view, and did you ask President Gul to recognize the genocide by name?

President Obama. Well, my views are on the record, and I have not changed views. What I have been very encouraged by is news that

under President Gul's leadership, you are seeing a series of negotiations, a process in place between Armenia and Turkey to resolve a whole host of longstanding issues including this one.

I want to be as encouraging as possible around those negotiations which are moving forward and could bear fruit very quickly, very soon. And so as a consequence, what I want to do is not focus on my views right now but focus on the views of the Turkish and the Armenian people. If they can move forward and deal with a difficult and tragic history, then I think the entire world should encourage them.

And so what I told the President was I want to be as constructive as possible in moving these issues forward quickly. And my sense is, is that they are moving quickly. I don't want to, as the President of the United States, preempt any possible arrangements or announcements that might be made in the near future. I just want to say that we are going to be a partner in working through these issues in such a way that the most important parties, the Turks and the Armenians, are finally coming to terms in a constructive way.

Q. So if I understand you correctly, your view hasn't changed, but you'll put in abeyance the issue of whether to use that word in the future?

President Obama. What I'd like to do is to encourage President Gul to move forward with what have been some very fruitful negotiations. And I'm not interested in the United States in any way tilting these negotiations one way or another while they are having useful discussions.

Q. Thank you.

President Gul. Let me also share my views on the subject. This is an issue under great discussion. But it is not a legal or political issue, it's a historical issue. What is being discussed is a situation that was experienced in 1915 under the conditions of World War I, when the Ottoman Empire was battling on four fronts. And unfortunately, some citizens of the empire then were provoked by some other countries and there were many internal clashes and many people lost their lives. And we share the sorrow of all those who lost their lives, but we have to remember that the Muslim population also suffered greatly at the same time.

And at the time, from the Balkans, from the Caucasus, there were millions of Muslim Turks who were displaced, who were having to come to travel to Turkey, and there were many losses as they traveled. So the losses there took place during the chaotic times of the situation then.

But when the Turkish republic, the modern republic, was established, the Turkish republic did not create this into big issue in order not to create greater hatred or hostility in future generations. But unfortunately, these issues, politically, especially by the diaspora, have been brought to the agenda as a way to perhaps cling to their identity.

And our view to that has been that we should let the historians, the experts on the subject, sit down and talk about this issue. We are ready to face the realities, the facts. It cannot be the politicians and the legal experts who can make decisions here as to what happened when, under what conditions, and who lost more lives and who is right and who is wrong. It is not a parliamentarian, a politician who can make a decision on this without knowing the circumstances to the situation.

So that's why we suggested that a joint history commission be established and that we would agree to the results of the—or the conclusions of this commission. And Turkey opened—made its archives available for that purpose. And we invited everyone, including the Armenians, and we took one more step forward and we said that if another country, for example, the United States or France, if they are very much interested in this issue, then they too could be a part of this joint commission, and we would be ready to listen to the conclusions of that commission.

We, as Turkey, we would like to have good relations with all the countries in our region. Our relations with Armenia, unfortunately, did not exist so much, although there are some Armenian citizens in Turkey now. There are more than 70,000 Armenians who work, live in Turkey, who send money back to their families, and there are some cultural activities, some flights. But we didn't have other

relations. And our goal in order to normalize these relations, as Mr. President has just said, we initiated some discussions to normalize relations, and we would like to see a good resolution of these discussions.

No doubt there's a new situation in the Caucasus. We saw how potential events could flare up in the Caucuses last year. So it's important that in this process we work together to try to resolve the issues in the Caucasus. We should work to resolve issues between Armenia and Azerbaijan and all the conflicts in the region so that the area becomes fertile ground for greater cooperation. And we have a lot of work, with the best of intentions, in that regard. And I do believe that when we reach a conclusion, we will have resolved many issues.

Yes, now——

Turkey-U.S. Relations/Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)

Q. A question to both Presidents, both leaders. Mr. Obama, during the Bush Presidency there were some difficulties in Turkish-American relations, and certain steps were taken to resolve those difficulties. We are in the third month of your Presidency and there is a high expectation in the Turkish public opinion as well about Turkish-American relations. So what will be changes in your outlook on Turkish-American relations as opposed to the previous administration?

Another question to both Presidents. You said that you discussed fighting against terrorism. There's, again, a lot of expectation in the Turkish public opinion regarding the elimination of the PKK. What sort of concrete steps will we see in that regard?

President Obama. As I mentioned at the outset, I think, despite some of the problems that we saw beginning in 2003, that you have seen steady improvement between U.S.-Turkish relations. I don't think they ever deteriorated so far that we ceased to be friends and allies. And what I hope to do is to build on what is already a strong foundation. As I indicated earlier, commercial ties can be improved. That's an area where I think the President and I share a vision.

I think, when it comes to our cooperation on terrorism, I've been very clear that PKK is on our terrorist watch list. As a NATO ally of Turkey's, we are very comfortable with providing them the assistance they need to reduce the threat. We have seen that cooperation bear fruit over the last several months, over the last year. You've seen a lessening of the attacks that have been taking place. We'll continue to provide that support, and President Gul and I discussed how we can provide additional support on that front. But we have been very clear that terrorism is not acceptable in any circumstances.

I think that where there's the most promise of building stronger U.S.-Turkish relations is in the recognition that Turkey and the United States can build a model partnership in which a predominantly Christian nation and a predominantly Muslim nation, a Western nation and a nation that straddles two continents—that we can create a modern international community that is respectful, that is secure, that is prosperous; that there are not tensions—inevitable tensions between cultures, which I think is extraordinarily important.

That's something that's very important to me. I've said before that one of the great strengths of the United States is—although, as I mentioned, we have a very large Christian population, we do not consider ourselves a Christian nation or a Jewish nation or a Muslim nation; we consider ourselves a nation of citizens who are bound by ideals and a set of values.

I think Turkey was—modern Turkey was founded with a similar set of principles, and yet what we're seeing is—in both countries—that promise of a secular country that is respectful of religious freedom, respectful of rule of law, respectful of freedom, upholding these values and being willing to stand up for them in the international stage. If we are joined together in delivering that message, East and West, to the world, then I think that we can have an extraordinary impact. And I'm very much looking forward to that partnership in the days to come.

Okay.

President Gul. Okay. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 1:55 p.m. at Cankaya Palace. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey. President Gul spoke

in Turkish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Portions of this news conference could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Remarks to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey in Ankara
April 6, 2009

Mr. Speaker, Madam Deputy Speaker, distinguished members, I am honored to speak in this chamber, and I am committed to renewing the alliance between our nations and the friendship between our people.

This is my first trip overseas as President of the United States. I've been to the G–20 summit in London and the NATO summit in Strasbourg and the European Union summit in Prague. Some people have asked me if I chose to continue my travels to Ankara and Istanbul to send a message to the world. And my answer is simple: *evet*—yes. Turkey is a critical ally. Turkey is an important part of Europe. And Turkey and the United States must stand together and work together to overcome the challenges of our time.

Now, this morning I had the great privilege of visiting the tomb of your extraordinary founder of your republic. And I was deeply impressed by this beautiful memorial to a man who did so much to shape the course of history. But it is also clear that the greatest monument to Ataturk's life is not something that can be cast in stone and marble. His greatest legacy is Turkey's strong, vibrant, secular democracy, and that is the work that this assembly carries on today.

Now, this future was not easily assured; it was not guaranteed. At the end of World War I, Turkey could have succumbed to the foreign powers that were trying to claim its territory, or sought to restore an ancient empire. But Turkey chose a different future. You freed yourself from foreign control, and you founded a republic that commands the respect of the United States and the wider world.

And there is a simple truth to this story. Turkey's democracy is your own achievement. It was not forced upon you by any outside power, nor did it come without struggle and sacrifice. Turkey draws strength from both the successes of the past and from the efforts of each generation of Turks that makes new progress for your people.

Now, my country's democracy has its own story. The general who led America in revolution and governed as our first President was, as many of you know, George Washington. And like you, we built a grand monument to honor our Founding Father, a towering obelisk that stands in the heart of the Capital City that bears Washington's name. I can see the Washington Monument from the window of the White House every day.

It took decades to build. There were frequent delays. Over time, more and more people contributed to help make this monument the inspiring structure that still stands tall today. Among those who came to our aid were friends from all across the world who offered their own tributes to Washington and the country he helped to found.

And one of those tributes came from Istanbul. Ottoman Sultan Abdulmecid sent a marble plaque that helped to build the Washington Monument. Inscribed in the plaque was a poem that began with a few simple words: "So as to strengthen the friendship between the two countries." Over 150 years have passed since those words were carved into marble. Our nations have changed in many ways, but our friendship is strong, and our alliance endures.

It is a friendship that flourished in the years after World War II, when President Truman committed our Nation to the defense of Turkey's freedom and sovereignty and Turkey committed itself into the NATO alliance. Turkish troops have served by our side from Korea to Kosovo to Kabul. Together we withstood the great test of the cold war. Trade between our nations has steadily advanced; so has cooperation in science and research.

The ties among our people have deepened as well, and more and more Americans of Turkish origin live and work and succeed

within our borders. And as a basketball fan, I've even noticed that Hedo Turkoglu and Mehmet Okur have got some pretty good basketball games.

So the United States and Turkey have not always agreed on every issue, and that's to be expected; no two nations do. But we have stood together through many challenges over the last 60 years. And because of the strength of our alliance and the endurance of our friendship, both America and Turkey are stronger and the world is more secure.

Now our two democracies are confronted by an unprecedented set of challenges: an economic crisis that recognizes no borders, extremism that leads to the killing of innocent men and women and children, strains on our energy supply and a changing climate, the proliferation of the world's deadliest weapons, and the persistence of tragic conflict.

These are the great tests of our young century. And the choices that we make in the coming years will determine whether the future will be shaped by fear or by freedom, by poverty or by prosperity, by strife or by a just, secure, and lasting peace.

This much is certain: No one nation can confront these challenges alone, and all nations have a stake in overcoming them. That is why we must listen to one another and seek common ground. That is why we must build on our mutual interests and rise above our differences. We are stronger when we act together. That is the message that I've carried with me throughout this trip to Europe. That is the message that I delivered when I had the privilege of meeting with your President and with your Prime Minister. That will be the approach of the United States of America going forward.

Already, America and Turkey are working with the G–20 on an unprecedented response to an unprecedented economic crisis. Now, this past week, we came together to ensure that the world's largest economies take strong and coordinated action to stimulate growth and restore the flow of credit; to reject the pressures of protectionism and to extend a hand to developing countries and the people hit hardest by this downturn; and to dramatically reform our regulatory system so that the world never faces a crisis like this again.

As we go forward, the United States and Turkey can pursue many opportunities to serve prosperity for our people. The President and I this morning talked about expanding the ties of commerce and trade. There's enormous opportunity when it comes to energy to create jobs. And we can increase new sources to not only free ourselves from dependence of other energies—other countries' energy sources, but also to combat climate change. We should build on our Clean Technology Fund to leverage efficiency and renewable energy investments in Turkey. And to power markets in Turkey and Europe, the United States will continue to support your central role as an east-west corridor for oil and natural gas.

Now, this economic cooperation only reinforces the common security that Europe and the United States share with Turkey as a NATO ally and the common values that we share as democracies. So in meeting the challenges of the 21st century, we must seek the strength of a Europe that is truly united, peaceful, and free.

So let me be clear: The United States strongly supports Turkey's bid to become a member of the European Union. We speak not as members of the EU, but as close friends of both Turkey and Europe. Turkey has been a resolute ally and a responsible partner in transatlantic and European institutions. Turkey is bound to Europe by more than the bridges over the Bosporus. Centuries of shared history, culture, and commerce bring you together. Europe gains by the diversity of ethnicity, tradition and faith; it is not diminished by it. And Turkish membership would broaden and strengthen Europe's foundation once more.

Now, of course, Turkey has its own responsibilities. And you've made important progress towards membership. But I also know that Turkey has pursued difficult political reforms not simply because it's good for EU membership, but because it's right for Turkey.

In the last several years, you've abolished state security courts. You've expanded the right to counsel. You've reformed the penal code and strengthened laws that govern the freedom of the press and assembly. You've lifted bans on

teaching and broadcasting Kurdish, and the world noted with respect the important signal sent through a new state Kurdish television station.

Now, these achievements have created new laws that must be implemented and a momentum that should be sustained. For democracies cannot be static, they must move forward. Freedom of religion and expression lead to a strong and vibrant civil society that only strengthens the state, which is why steps like reopening Halki Seminary will send such an important signal inside Turkey and beyond. An enduring commitment to the rule of law is the only way to achieve the security that comes from justice for all people. Robust minority rights let societies benefit from the full measure of contributions from all citizens.

I say this as the President of a country that not very long ago made it hard for somebody who looks like me to vote, much less be President of the United States. But it is precisely that capacity to change that enriches our countries. Every challenge that we face is more easily met if we tend to our own democratic foundation. Now, this work is never over. That's why, in the United States, we recently ordered the prison at Guantanamo Bay closed. That's why we prohibited, without exception or equivocation, the use of torture. All of us have to change, and sometimes change is hard.

Another issue that confronts all democracies as they move to the future is how we deal with the past. The United States is still working through some of our own darker periods in our history. Facing the Washington Monument that I spoke of is a memorial of Abraham Lincoln, the man who freed those who were enslaved even after Washington led our Revolution. Our country still struggles with the legacies of slavery and segregation, the past treatment of Native Americans.

Human endeavor is by its nature imperfect. History is often tragic, but unresolved it can be a heavy weight. Each country must work through its past. And reckoning with the past can help us seize a better future. Now, I know there's strong views in this chamber about the terrible events of 1915. And while there's been a good deal of commentary about my views, it's really about how the Turkish and Armenian people deal with the past. And the best way forward for the Turkish and Armenian people is a process that works through the past in a way that is honest, open, and constructive.

We've already seen historic and courageous steps taken by Turkish and Armenian leaders. These contacts hold out the promise of a new day. An open border would return the Turkish and Armenian people to a peaceful and prosperous coexistence that would serve both of your nations. So I want you to know that the United States strongly supports the full normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia. It is a cause worth working towards.

It speaks to Turkey's leadership that you are poised to be the only country in the region to have normal and peaceful relations with all the South Caucasus nations. And to advance that peace, you can play a constructive role in helping to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, which has continued for far too long.

Advancing peace also includes the disputes that persist in the eastern Mediterranean. And here there's a cause for hope. The two Cypriot leaders have an opportunity through their commitment to negotiations under the United Nations Good Offices Mission. And the United States is willing to offer all the help sought by the parties as they work towards a just and lasting settlement that reunifies Cyprus into a bizonal and bicommunal federation.

Now, these efforts speak to one part of the critical region that surrounds Turkey. And when we consider the challenges before us, on issue after issue, we share common goals. In the Middle East, we share the goal of a lasting peace between Israel and its neighbors. Now let me be clear: The United States strongly supports the goal of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. That is a goal shared by Palestinians, Israelis, and people of good will around the world. That is a goal that the parties agreed to in the roadmap and at Annapolis. That is a goal that I will actively pursue as President of the United States.

We know the road ahead will be difficult. Both Israelis and Palestinians must take steps that are necessary to build confidence and

trust. Both Israelis and Palestinians, both must live up to the commitments they have made. Both must overcome longstanding passions and the politics of the moment to make progress towards a secure and lasting peace.

The United States and Turkey can help the Palestinians and Israelis make this journey. Like the United States, Turkey has been a friend and partner in Israel's quest for security. And like the United States, you seek a future of opportunity and statehood for the Palestinians. So now, working together, we must not give into pessimism and mistrust. We must pursue every opportunity for progress, as you've done by supporting negotiations between Syria and Israel. We must extend a hand to those Palestinians who are in need, while helping them strengthen their own institutions. Now, we must reject the use of terror and recognize that Israel's security concerns are legitimate.

The peace of the region will also be advanced if Iran forgoes any nuclear weapons ambitions. Now, as I made clear in Prague yesterday, no one is served by the spread of nuclear weapons, least of all Turkey. You live in a difficult region, and a nuclear arm race would not serve the security of this nation well. This part of the world has known enough violence. It has known enough hatred. It does not need a race for an ever-more powerful tool of destruction.

Now, I have made it clear to the people and leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran that the United States seeks engagement based on mutual interest and mutual respect. We want Iran to play its rightful role in the community of nations. Iran is a great civilization. We want them to engage in the economic and political integration that brings prosperity and security. But Iran's leaders must choose whether they will try to build a weapon or build a better future for their people.

So both Turkey and the United States support a secure and united Iraq that does not serve as a safe haven for terrorists. I know there were differences about whether to go to war. There were differences within my own country as well. But now we must come together as we end this war responsibly, because the future of Iraq is inseparable from the future of the broader region. As I've already announced, and many of you are aware, the United States will remove our combat brigades by the end of next August, while working with the Iraqi Government as they take responsibility for security. And we will work with Iraq, Turkey, and all Iraq's neighbors to forge a new dialog that reconciles differences and advances our common security.

Make no mistake, though: Iraq, Turkey, and the United States face a common threat from terrorism. That includes the Al Qaida terrorists who have sought to drive Iraqis apart and destroy their country. That includes the PKK. There is no excuse for terror against any nation. As President and as a NATO ally, I pledge that you will have our support against the terrorist activities of the PKK or anyone else. Now, these efforts will be strengthened by the continued work to build ties of cooperation between Turkey, the Iraqi Government, and Iraq's Kurdish leaders, and by your continued efforts to promote education and opportunity and democracy for the Kurdish population here inside Turkey.

Now, finally, we share the common goal of denying Al Qaida a safe haven in Pakistan or Afghanistan. The world has come too far to let this region backslide and to let Al Qaida terrorists plot further attacks. And that's why we are committed to a more focused effort to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaida. That is why we are increasing our efforts to train Afghans to sustain their own security and to reconcile former adversaries. That's why we are increasing our support for the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan, so that we stand on the side not only of security, but also of opportunity and the promise of a better life.

Turkey has been a true partner. Your troops were among the first in the International Security Assistance Force. You have sacrificed much in this endeavor. Now we must achieve our goals together. I appreciate that you've offered to help us train and support Afghan security forces and expand opportunity across the region. Together, we can rise to meet this challenge like we have so many before.

I know there have been difficulties these last few years. I know that the trust that binds the United States and Turkey has been strained, and I know that strain is shared in many places where the Muslim faith is practiced. So let me

say this as clearly as I can: The United States is not and will never be at war with Islam. In fact, our partnership with the Muslim world is critical, not just in rolling back the violent ideologies that people of all faiths reject, but also to strengthen opportunity for all its people.

I also want to be clear that America's relationship with the Muslim community, the Muslim world, cannot and will not just be based upon opposition to terrorism. We seek broader engagement based on mutual interests and mutual respect. We will listen carefully; we will bridge misunderstandings; and we will seek common ground. We will be respectful, even when we do not agree. We will convey our deep appreciation for the Islamic faith, which has done so much over the centuries to shape the world, including in my own country. The United States has been enriched by Muslim Americans. Many other Americans have Muslims in their families or have lived in a Muslim-majority country. I know because I am one of them.

Above all—above all we will demonstrate through actions our commitment to a better future. I want to help more children get the education that they need to succeed. We want to promote health care in places where people are vulnerable. We want to expand the trade and investment that can bring prosperity for all people. In the months ahead, I will present specific programs to advance these goals. Our focus will be on what we can do, in partnership with people across the Muslim world, to advance our common hopes and our common dreams. And when people look back on this time, let it be said of America that we extended the hand of friendship to all people.

Now, there is an old Turkish proverb: "You cannot put out fire with flames." America knows this. Turkey knows this. There's some who must be met by force; they will not compromise. But force alone cannot solve our problems, and it is no alternative to extremism. The future must belong to those who create, not those who destroy. That is the future we must work for, and we must work for it together.

I know there are those who like to debate Turkey's future. They see your country at the crossroads of continents and touched by the currents of history. They know that this has been a place where civilizations meet and different peoples come together. They wonder whether you will be pulled in one direction or another.

But I believe here is what they don't understand: Turkey's greatness lies in your ability to be at the center of things. This is not where East and West divide; this is where they come together, in the beauty of your culture, in the richness of your history, in the strength of your democracy, in your hopes for tomorrow.

I am honored to stand here with you, to look forward to the future that we must reach for together, and to reaffirm America's commitment to our strong and enduring friendship.

Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:30 p.m. in the Turkish Grand National Assembly Complex. In his remarks, he referred to Koksal Toptan, Speaker, and Meral Aksener, Deputy Speaker, Grand National Assembly of Turkey; Hedo Turkoglu, forward, Orlando Magic; Mehmet Okur, center and forward, Utah Jazz; President Abdullah Gul and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey; President Demetris Christofias of Cyprus; and President Mehmet Ali Talat of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. He also referred to the PKK, the Kurdistan Workers' Party.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey in Ankara
April 6, 2009

Prime Minister Erdogan. Distinguished members of the press, let me start by saying how pleased I am to have this opportunity to host the distinguished President of the United States, Barack Hussein Obama.

We have had a very busy day in Ankara today, and it will continue with a reception in Istanbul, and then we will have an ongoing—a continuing program tomorrow, which will mean that the visit to Turkey will have been quite a busy one.

We have had opportunity as two strategic partners to review the status of our bilateral relations. We also have had opportunity to discuss regional issues such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Middle East. In addition to discussing these issues, we've also discussed issues looking forward into the future, such as energy. And we had an opportunity to assess the recent development with respect to NATO. I do believe that our fight against terrorism will continue in the future with the same determination and the same solidarity.

And I would like to thank the President for the warm interest that he has shown to our country, Turkey. And I leave the floor to the President.

President Obama. First of all, I want to thank the Prime Minister as well as the entire Turkish Government, from the President to the Speaker, for their extraordinary hospitality.

I had the opportunity to get to know the Prime Minister when we spent time together at the G–20. I was impressed with his leadership, and now I'm even more impressed because he gave a perfect summary of our conversation.

So just to reiterate what I said in my speech and what I've said throughout my visit, I think that Turkey is a critical strategic partner with the United States, not just in combating terrorism but in developing the kind of economic links, cultural links, and political links that will allow both countries to prosper and, I truly believe, the entire region and the world to prosper.

So I'm very much looking forward to the partnership with Turkey, and I'm convinced that under Mr. Erdogan and President Gul and their Government are going to be excellent partners in that process.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:05 p.m. in Prime Minister Erdogan's office. In his remarks, he referred to Koksal Toptan, Speaker, Grand National Assembly of Turkey. Prime Minister Erdogan spoke in Turkish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks in a Discussion With Students in Istanbul, Turkey
April 7, 2009

The President. Thank you. Thank you so much. Well, it is a great pleasure to be here. Let me begin by thanking Professor Rahmi Aksungur—did I say that properly?—who is director of the university here. And I want to thank all the young people who've gathered together. This is a great privilege for me, and I'm really looking forward to it.

I'm going to make a few remarks at the beginning, and then I want to spend most of the time having an exchange and giving you an opportunity to ask questions of me, and I may ask some questions of you.

So as I said yesterday, I came to Turkey on my first trip overseas as President for a reason, and it's not just to see the beautiful sights here in Istanbul. I came here to reaffirm the importance of Turkey and the importance of the partnership between our two countries. I came here out of my respect to Turkey's democracy and culture and my belief that Turkey plays a critically important role in the region and in the

world. And I came to Turkey because I'm deeply committed to rebuilding a relationship between the United States and the people of the Muslim world, one that's grounded in mutual interest and mutual respect.

Turkey and the United States have a long history of partnership and cooperation. Exchanges between our two peoples go back over 150 years. We've been NATO allies for more than five decades. We have deep ties in trade and education, in science and research. And America is proud to have many men and women of Turkish origin who have made our country a more dynamic and a more successful place. So Turkish-American relations rest on a strong foundation.

That said, I know that there have been some difficulties in recent years. In some ways, that foundation has been weakening. We've had some specific differences over policy, but we've also, at times, lost the sense that both of our countries are in this together; that we have shared interests and shared values; and that we can have a partnership that serves our common hopes and common dreams.

So I came here to renew that foundation and to build on it. I enjoyed visiting your Parliament. I've had productive discussions with your President and your Prime Minister. But I also always like to take some time to talk to people directly, especially young people. So in the next few minutes, I want to focus on three areas in which I think we can make some progress: advancing dialog between our two countries, but also advancing dialog between the United States and the Muslim world; extending opportunity in education and in social welfare; and then also reaching out to young people as our best hope for peaceful, prosperous futures in both Turkey and in the United States. Now, let me just talk briefly about those three points.

First, I believe we can have a dialog that's open, honest, vibrant, and grounded in respect. And I want you to know that I'm personally committed to a new chapter of American engagement. We can't afford to talk past one another, to focus only on our differences, or to let the walls of mistrust go up around us. Instead, we have to listen carefully to each other. We have to focus on places where we can find common ground and respect each other's views, even when we disagree. And if we do so, I believe we can bridge some of our differences and divisions that we've had in the past.

A part of that process involves giving you a better sense of America. I know that the stereotypes of the United States are out there, and I know that many of them are informed not by direct exchange or dialog, but by television shows and movies and misinformation. Sometimes it suggests that America has become selfish and crass, or that we don't care about the world beyond us. And I'm here to tell you that that's not the country that I know, and it's not the country that I love.

America, like every other nation, has made mistakes and has its flaws. But for more than two centuries, we have strived at great cost and sacrifice to form a more perfect union, to seek with other nations a more hopeful world. We remain committed to a greater good, and we have citizens in countless countries who are serving in wonderful capacities as doctors and as agricultural specialists that people—teachers—people who are committed to making the world a better place.

We're also a country of different backgrounds and races and religions that have come together around a set of shared ideals. And we are still a place where anybody has a chance to make it if they try. If that wasn't true, then somebody named Barack Hussein Obama would not be elected President of the United States of America. That's the America I want you to know.

Second, I believe that we can forge a partnership with Turkey and across the Muslim world on behalf of greater opportunity. This trip began for me in London at the G–20, and one of the issues we discussed there was how to help peoples and countries who, through no fault of their own, are being very hard hit by the current world economic crisis. We took some important steps to extend a hand to emerging markets and developing countries by setting aside over a trillion dollars to the International Monetary Fund and by making historic investments in food security.

But there's also a larger issue of how Turkey and America can help those who've been left behind in this new global economy. All of our countries have poverty within it. All of it—all of our countries have young people who aren't obtaining the opportunities that they need to get the education that they need. And that's not just true here in Turkey or in the United States, but that's true around the world. And so we should be working together to figure out how we can help people live out their dreams.

Here there's great potential for the United States to work with Muslims around the world on behalf of a more prosperous future. And I want to pursue a new partnership on behalf of basic priorities: What can we do to help more children get a good education? What can we do to expand health care to regions that are on the margins of global society? What steps can we take in terms of trade and investment to create new jobs and industries and ultimately advance prosperity for all of us? To me, these are the true tests of whether we are leaving a world that is better and more hopeful than the one we found.

Finally, I want to say how much I'm counting on young people to help shape a more peaceful and prosperous future. Already, this generation, your generation, has come of age in a world that's been marked by change that's both dramatic and difficult. While you are empowered through unprecedented access to information and invention, you're also confronted with big challenges: a global economy in transition, climate change, extremism, old conflicts but new weapons. These are all issues that you have to deal with as young people, both in Turkey and around the world.

In America, I'm proud to see a new spirit of activism and responsibility take root. I've seen it in the young Americans who are choosing to teach in our schools or volunteer abroad. I saw it in my own Presidential campaign, where young people provided the energy and the idealism that made effort possible. And I've seen it wherever I travel abroad and speak to groups like this. Everywhere I go I find young people who are passionate, engaged, and deeply informed about the world around them.

So as President, I'd like to find new ways to connect young Americans to young people all around the world, by supporting opportunities to learn new languages and serve and study, welcoming students from other countries to our shores. That's always been a critical part of how America engages the world. That's how my father, who was from Kenya, from Africa, came to the United States and eventually met my mother. It's how Robert College was founded so long ago here in Istanbul.

Simple exchanges can break down walls between us. For when people come together and speak to one another and share a common experience, then their common humanity is revealed. We are reminded that we're joined together by our pursuit of a life that's productive and purposeful, and when that happens mistrust begins to fade and our smaller differences no longer overshadow the things that we share. And that's where progress begins.

So to all of you, I want you to know that the world will be what you make of it. You can choose to build new bridges instead of building new walls. You can choose to put aside longstanding divisions in pursuit of lasting peace. You can choose to advance a prosperity that is shared by all people and not just the wealthy few. And I want you to know that in these endeavors you will find a partner and a supporter and a friend in the United States of America.

So I very much appreciate all of you joining me here today. And now what I'd like to do is take some questions. I think we've got—do we have some microphones in the audience? So what I'd like to do is people can just raise their hands, and I'll choose each person—if you could stand up and introduce yourself. I have a little microphone in my pocket here in case you're speaking Turkish, because my Turkish is not so good—[*laughter*]—and I'll have a translator for me.

Okay? All right. And I want to make sure that we end before the call to prayer, so we have about—it looks like we have about half an hour. All right? Okay, we'll start right here.

Environment

Q. I'm—[*inaudible*]—from the university. I want to ask some questions about climate issue.

The President. Yes.

Q. Yesterday you said that peace in home and peace in world, but to my opinion, firstly, the peace should be in nature. For this reason, I wonder that—when the U.S.A. will sign the Kyoto Protocol?

The President. Well, it's an excellent question. Is this mike working? It is? Okay. Thank you very much. What was your name?

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. As many of you know, I think the science tells us that the planet is getting warmer because of carbon gases that are being sent into the atmosphere. And if we do not take steps soon to deal with it, then you could see an increase of 3, 4, 5 degrees, which would have a devastating effect. The oceans would rise; we don't know what would happen to the beauty of Istanbul if suddenly the seas rise. Changing weather patterns would create extraordinary drought in some regions, floods in others. It could have a devastating effect on human civilization. So we've got to take steps to deal with this.

When the Kyoto Protocol was put forward, the United States opted out of it, as did China and some other countries. And I think that was a mistake, particularly because the United States and—is the biggest carbon—has been the biggest carbon producer. China is now becoming the biggest carbon producer because its population is so large. And so we need to bring an international agreement together very soon.

It doesn't make sense for the United States to sign Kyoto because Kyoto is about to end. So instead, what my administration is doing is preparing for the next round, which is—there will be discussions in Copenhagen at the end of this year. And what we want to do is to prepare an agenda both in the United States and work internationally so that we can start making progress on these issues.

Now, there are a number of elements. Number one, we have to be more energy efficient. And so all countries around the world should be sharing technology and information about how we can reduce the usage of electricity, and how we can make our transportation more efficient, make our cars get better gas mileage. Reducing the amount of energy we use is absolutely critical.

We should also think about are there ways that if we're using fossil fuels—oil, coal, other fossil fuels—are there ways of capturing or reducing the carbon emissions that come from them? So this is going to be a big, big project and a very difficult one and a very costly one. And I don't want to lie to you. I think the politics of this in every country is going to be very difficult, because if you suddenly say to people, "You have to change your factory to make it more energy efficient," well, that costs the factory owner money. If you say to a power plant, "You have to produce energy in a different way," and that costs them money, then they want to pass that cost on to consumers, which means everybody's electricity prices go up. And that is something that is not very popular.

So there are going to be big political struggles in every country to try to ratify an agreement on these issues. And that's why it's going to be so important that young people like yourself, who will be suffering the consequences if we don't do something, that you are active politically in making sure that politicians in every country are responsive to these issues and that we educate the public more than we have so far.

But it is an excellent question. Thank you.

All right, this gentleman right here.

Peace and Understanding Around the World

Q. Thank you. My name is—[*inaudible*]—and I'm studying at Bahcesehir University, and my major is energy engineering, so——

The President. Well, there you go. You could have given an even better answer.

Q. Yes, I hope we will solve that problem in the future. So my question is, what actions will you take after you wrote, quote, "Peace at home, peace at the world," to do—[*inaudible*]? And——

The President. I'm sorry, could you repeat the question?

Q. What actions will you take after you wrote your quote, "Peace at home and peace at the world," to—[*inaudible*]? And what do

you think, as Turkish young men and women, how can we help you at this purpose you have?

The President. Well, some people say that maybe I'm being too idealistic. I made a speech in Prague about reducing and ultimately eliminating nuclear weapons, and some people said, "Ah, that will never happen." And some people have said, "Why are you discussing the Middle East when it's not going to be possible for the Israelis and the Palestinians to come together?" Or, "Why are you reaching out to the Iranians, because the U.S. and Iran can never agree on anything?"

My attitude is, is that all these things are hard. I mean, I'm not naive. If it was easy, it would have already been done. Somebody else would have done it. But if we don't try, if we don't reach high, then we won't make any progress. And I think that there's a lot of progress that can be made.

And as I said in my opening remarks, I think the most important thing to start with is dialog. When you have a chance to meet people from other cultures and other countries and you listen to them, and you find out that, even though you may speak a different language or you may have a different religious faith, it turns out that you care about your family, you have your same hopes about being able to have a career that is useful to the society, you hope that you can raise a family of your own and that your children will be healthy and have a good education; that all those things that human beings all around the world share are more important than the things that are different.

And so that is a very important place to start. And that's where young people can be very helpful, because I think old people, we get into habits, and we become suspicious, and we carry grudges. Right? You know, it was interesting, when I met with President Medvedev of Russia—and we actually had a very good dialog—and we were—we spoke about the fact that although both of us were born during the cold war, we came of age after the cold war had already begun to decline, which means we have a slightly different attitude than somebody who was seeing Russia only as—the Soviet Union only as an enemy, or who saw America only as an enemy.

So young people, they can get rid of some of the old baggage and the old suspicions, and I think that's very important. But understanding alone is not enough. Then you—we actually have to do the work. And for the United States, I think that means that we have to make sure that our actions are responsible. So on international issues like climate change, we have to take leadership. If we're producing a lot of pollution that's causing global warming, then we have to step forward and say, here's what we're willing to do, and then ask countries like China to join us.

If we want to say to Iran, "Don't develop nuclear weapons, because if you develop them, then everybody in the region is going to want them, and you'll have a nuclear arms race in the Middle East, and that will be dangerous for everybody"—if we want to say that to the Iranians, it helps if we are also saying, "And we will reduce our own," so that we have more moral authority in making those claims.

If we want to communicate to countries that we sincerely care about the well-being of their people, then we have to make sure that our aid programs and our assistance programs are meaningful. So words are good and understanding is good, but ultimately, it has to translate into concrete actions. And it takes time. I was just talking to my press team, and they were amused because some of my reporter friends from the States were asking, "How come you didn't solve everything on this trip?" They said, "Well, you know, it's only been a week. These things take time." And the idea is that you lay the groundwork and slowly, over time, if you make small efforts, they can add up into big efforts. And that's, I think, the approach that we want to take in promoting more peace and prosperity around the world.

Okay, let me make sure I get all sides of the room here. This young lady right here.

Turkey's European Union Membership Bid

Q. In one of your interviews, you said you want us to be a member of the European Union. But after that, Nicolas Sarkozy told that it's not yours; it's European Union's decision. Now I want to ask you that—what's your opinion, and why Nicolas Sarkozy said that? Is that

because he's more likely to support the so-called Armenian genocide?

The President. You know, the—I don't think—well, first of all, it's true; I'm not a member of—the United States is not a member of the European Union, so it's not our decision to make. But that doesn't prevent me from having an opinion. I mean, I notice the Europeans have had a lot of opinions about U.S. policy for a long time. [*Laughter*] Right? They haven't been shy about giving us suggestions about what we should be doing, so I don't think there's anything wrong with us reciprocating. That's what friends do; we try to be honest about what we think is the right approach.

I think it is the right approach to have Turkey join the European Union. I think if Turkey can be a member of NATO and send its troops to help protect and support its allies and its young men and—are put in harm's way, well, I don't know why you should also not be able to sell apricots to Europe or have more freedom in terms of travel.

So I think it's the right thing to do. I also think it would send a strong signal that Europe is not monolithic but is diverse, and that that is a source of strength instead of weakness. So that's my opinion.

Now, President Sarkozy is a good friend and a good ally. As I said, friends are going to sometimes disagree on this. I haven't had a lengthy conversation with him about his position on this issue. My hope is, is that as time goes on and as trust builds, that this is ultimately something that occurs.

I don't get a sense that his opposition is related to the Armenian issue. I don't think that's it. I think it's a more fundamental issue of whether he's confident about Turkey's ability to integrate fully. But you'll probably have to ask him directly. So maybe when he comes here he'll have a town hall meeting like this one.

Okay, the gentleman right there. Yes, this one. Yes, go ahead. Here's a microphone.

Iraq's Kurdish Region/U.S. Foreign Policy

Q. First, I will ask about the Bush and you differences at the core, because some says just the face has changed and that—but the core is the same still. They will have a fight with the Middle East, and they will have a fight with Iran.

And my second question is more—I give import to this: You will let the Kurdish state in northern Iraq? You will let—will you allow this?

The President. Okay, the——

Q. Thank you.

The President. Yes. Well, let me answer—I'll answer the Kurdish question first. You know, we are very clear about our position on Turkish territorial integrity. Turkey is an ally of ours, and part of what NATO allies do is to protect the territorial integrity of their allies. And so we are—we would be opposed to anything that would start cutting off parts of Turkey. And we have been very supportive in efforts to reduce terrorist activity by the PKK.

Now, I also think that it's important that the Kurdish minority inside of Turkey is free to advance in the society and that they have equal opportunity, that they have free political expression, that they are not suppressed in terms of opportunity. And I think that the President and Prime Minister are committed to that, but I want to continually encourage allowing, whether it's religious minorities or ethnic minorities, to be full parts of the society. And that, I think, is very, very important.

The first question, if I understood you correctly, is the suggestion that even though I present a different face from Bush, that the policies are the same and so there's really not much difference.

And, you know, I think this will be tested in time, because as I said before, moving the ship of state is a slow process. States are like big tankers; they're not like speedboats. You can't just whip them around and go in a new direction. Instead, you've got to slowly move it, and then eventually you end up in a very different place.

So let me just give you a few examples. When it comes to Iraq, I opposed the war in Iraq. I thought it was a bad idea. Now that we're there, I have a responsibility to make sure that as we bring troops out, that we do so in a careful enough way that you don't see a

complete collapse into violence. So some people might say, "Wait, I thought you were opposed to the war. Why don't you just get them all out right away?" Well, just because I was opposed at the outset, it doesn't mean that I don't have now responsibilities to make sure that we do things in a responsible fashion.

When it comes to climate change, George Bush didn't believe in climate change. I do believe in climate change; I think it's important. That doesn't mean that suddenly the day I'm elected I can say, okay, we're going to turn off all the lights, and everybody is going to stop driving. Right? All I can do is to start moving policies that, over time, are going to obtain a different result.

And then it is true, though, that there are some areas where I agree with many of my friends in the United States who are on the opposite political party. For example, I agree that Al Qaida is an enormous threat not just to the United States but to the world. I have no sympathy and I have no patience for people who would go around blowing up innocent people for a political cause. I don't believe in that.

So, yes, I think that it is just and right for the United States and NATO allies and other allies from around the world to do what we can to eliminate the threat of Al Qaida. Now, I think it's important that we don't just do that militarily. I think it's important that we provide educational opportunities for young people in Pakistan and Afghanistan so that they see a different path. And so my policies will be somewhat different, but I don't make any apologies for continuing the effort to prevent bombs going off or planes going into buildings that would kill innocents. I don't think any society can justify that.

And so, as I said, 4 years from now or 8 years from now, you can look back and you can see maybe what he did wasn't that different, and hopefully, you'll come to the conclusion that what I did made progress.

Okay. Yes, this young lady right here.

Turkey-U.S. Relations/Impact of the 2008 Presidential Election

Q. First of all, welcome to our country Turkey.

The President. Thank you.

Q. My name is—[*inaudible*]—from Middle East Technical University. I would like to continue in Turkish if it's possible—afterwards.

The President. Yes, let me—wait, wait, wait. See, I've got my——

Q. Thank you very much.

The President. Hold on.

Q. Thank you.

[*At this point, the participant continued in Turkish, and it was translated as follows below.*]

Interpreter. My first question is that in the event that Turkey becomes an EU member, what—how will that—how is that——

The President. I'm not getting it, you guys.

Interpreter. Test, test, test. Mr. President? Can you hear me now?

The President. Okay, try again.

Interpreter. Mr. President, can you hear me now?

The President. There you go.

Interpreter. In the event that Turkey becomes a member of the EU, how will that affect U.S. foreign policy and the alliance of civilizations?

And my second question is a little more personal. We watched your election with my American friends. Before you were elected, my friends who said that they were ashamed of being Americans; after you were elected, said that they were proud to be Americans. This is a very sudden and big change. What do you think the reason is for this change?

The President. Well, the—you know, the United States friendship with Turkey doesn't depend on their EU membership. So even if Turkey continued not to be a member of the EU, the United States, in our bilateral relations and in our relations as a NATO ally, can really strengthen progress. And I had long discussions with the President and the Prime Minister about a range of areas where we can improve relations, including business and commerce and trade.

We probably can increase trade between our two countries significantly, but we haven't really focused on that. Traditionally, the focus in Turkish-American relations has been around the military, and I think for us to broaden that

relationship and those exchanges could be very important.

You know, in terms of my election, I think that what people felt good about was it affirmed the sense that America is still a land of opportunity. I was not born into wealth. I wasn't born into fame. I come from a racial minority. My name is very unusual for the United States. And so I think people saw my election as proof, as testimony, that although we are imperfect, our society has continued to improve; that racial discrimination has been reduced; that educational opportunity for all people is something that is still available. And I also think that people were encouraged that somebody like me who has a background of living overseas, who has Muslims in his family, who—you know, that I might be able to help to build bridges with other parts of the world.

You know, the American people are a very hopeful people. We're an optimistic people by nature. We believe that anything is possible if we put our minds to it. And that is one of the qualities of America that I think the world appreciates. You know, sometimes people may think that we are—we aren't realistic enough about how the world works, and we think that we can just remake the world without regard to history, because we're still a relatively new nation. Compared to Turkey and how old this civilization is, America is still very new.

And so it's true that I think we believe that things can happen very fast and that transformations in politics or in economics or in science and technology can make our lives better overnight. So sometimes we need more patience. But I also think the world needs to have a sense that change is possible; that's a good thing. And that we don't have to always be stuck with old arguments. I mean, one thing that is interesting about Europe as I travel around is, you know, you hear disputes between countries that date back to a hundred years, a thousand years. People are still mad about things that happened a very long time ago. And so one thing America may have to offer is an insistence on looking forward and not always looking backwards.

Okay, I only have time for one more question. I'll give it to this gentleman right here.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey/Middle East Peace Process

[*The participant began his question in Turkish.*]

The President. Oh, wait, wait, wait, wait—I've got to get my earplug here.

[*The participant continued in Turkish, and it was translated as follows below.*]

Interpreter. My name is—[*inaudible*]—and I thank you for the opportunity to ask you a question. Right now I am in the Turkish language and literature faculty of this university. How do you assess the Prime Minister's attitude in Davos? Had you been in the same situation, would you have reacted the same way?

The President. Well, first of all, I think very highly of your Prime Minister. I've had a chance now to talk with him first in London. I had spoken to him on the phone previously, but we had the opportunity to meet in London during the G–20, and then we've been, obviously, having a number of visits while I've been here in Turkey.

And so I think that he is a good man who is very interested in promoting peace in the region and takes great pride, I believe, in trying to help work through the issues between Israel and its neighbors. And Turkey has a long history of being an ally and a friend of both Israel and its neighbors. And so it can occupy a unique position in trying to resolve some of these differences.

I wasn't at Davos so I don't want to offer an opinion about how he responded and what prompted his reaction. I will say this: That I believe that peace in the Middle East is possible. I think it will be based on two states, side by side, a Palestinian state and a Jewish state. I think in order to achieve that, both sides are going to have to make compromises.

I think we have a sense of what those compromises should be and will be. Now what we need is political will and courage on the part of leadership. And it is not the United States role or Turkey's role to tell people what they have to do, but we can be good friends in encouraging them to move the dialog forward.

I have to believe that the mothers of Palestinians and the mothers of Israelis hope the same thing for their children. They want them not to be vulnerable to violence. They don't want, when their child gets on a bus, to worry that that bus might explode. They don't want their child to have to suffer indignities because of who they are. And so sometimes I think that if you just put the mothers in charge for a while, that things would get resolved.

And it's that spirit of thinking about the future and not the past that I just talked about earlier that I think could help advance the peace process, because if you look at the situation there, over time, I don't believe it's sustainable. It's not sustainable for Israel's security because as populations grow around them, if there is more and more antagonism towards Israel, over time that will make Israel less secure. It's not sustainable for the Palestinians because increasingly their economies are unable to produce the jobs and the goods and the income for people's basic quality of life.

So we know that path is a dead end, and we've got to move in a new direction. But it's going to be hard. A lot of mistrust has been built up, a lot of anger, a lot of hatred, and unwinding that hatred requires patience. But it has been done. You know, think about—my Special Envoy to the Middle East is a gentleman named George Mitchell, who was a Senator in the United States and then became the Special Envoy for the United States in Northern Ireland. And the Protestants and the Catholics in Northern Ireland had been fighting for hundreds of years, and as recently as 20 years ago or 30 years ago, the antagonism, the hatred, was as fierce as any sectarian battle in the world.

And yet because of persistent, courageous efforts by leaders, a peace accord was arrived at. A government that uses the democratic process was formed. And I had in the White House just a few weeks ago the leader of the Protestants, the leaders of Catholics in the same room, the separatists and the unionists in the same room, as part of a single system. And so that tells me that anything's possible if we're willing to strive for it. But it will depend on young people like you being open to new ideas and new possibilities. And it will require young people like you never to stereotype or assume the worst about other people.

In the Muslim world, this notion that somehow everything is the fault of the Israelis lacks balance because there's two sides to every question. That doesn't mean that sometimes one side has done something wrong and should not be condemned, but it does mean there's always two sides to an issue.

I say the same thing to my Jewish friends, which is, you have to see the perspective of the Palestinians. Learning to stand in somebody else's shoes, to see through their eyes, that's how peace begins. And it's up to you to make that happen.

All right. Thank you very much, everybody. I enjoyed it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:18 p.m. at the Tophane Cultural Center. In his remarks, he referred to Rahmi Aksungur, professor and rector, Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University; President Abdullah Gul of Turkey; and President Nicolas Sarkozy of France.

Exchange With Reporters in Baghdad, Iraq
April 7, 2009

The President's Visit to Iraq

Q. Sir, can you tell us what your primary purpose is in being here?

The President. To say thank you to the troops. They are doing extraordinary work. General Odierno has been helping to lead a very effective operation here. We want to be fully briefed, and nothing does that better than face-to-face meetings.

I'll have the opportunity to meet with Prime Minister Maliki and President Talabani while I'm here. Obviously, we've spent a lot of time trying to get Afghanistan right. But I think it's important for us to remember that there's still a lot of work to be done here. And in addition to

thanking our troops, I also want to send a strong message to our diplomatic corps and our civilians that they're going to be critical to our success here.

We've made significant political progress. You've seen a greater willingness on the part of all the factions in Iraq to resolve their issues politically and through nonviolent means. But with the national elections coming up, many of the unresolved issues may be brought to a head. And it's very important for us to use all of our influence to encourage parties to resolve these issues in ways that are equitable and fair. And I think that my presence here can help do that.

Okay. Thank you, guys.

Not to mention, Chip [Chip Reid, CBS News], I thought you guys hadn't been on the road long enough. [*Laughter*] I know that you didn't feel like going home. We had underworked you, so I figured one more stop.

Meeting With Iraqi Leaders

Q. Did you say you're meeting with or talking to——

The President. I will be meeting with them face to face.

Q. Face to face?

Q. Will that be here, Mr. President?

The President. Yes, in the near vicinity.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:24 p.m. in Al Faw Palace at Camp Victory. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Forces—Iraq. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the 15th Anniversary of the Genocide in Rwanda
April 7, 2009

This week marks the 15th commemoration of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. It is a somber occasion that causes us to reflect upon the deaths of the more than 800,000 men, women, and children who were killed simply because of their ethnicity or their political beliefs. The memory of these events also deepens our commitment to act when faced with genocide and to work with partners around the world to prevent future atrocities. The figure of 800,000 is so enormous, so daunting, that it runs the risk of becoming a statistic. Today, we must remember that each of the 800,000 individuals who died in 1994 had their own story, their own family, and their own dreams. As we mourn their senseless passing, we must also acknowledge the courageous men and women who survived the genocide and have since demonstrated remarkable strength and generosity in forgiving those who committed these heinous acts. These individuals inspire us daily by working to restore trust and rebuild hope in Rwanda. The United States is committed to its partnership with Rwanda and will continue to support efforts to promote sustainable development, respect for human rights, and lasting peace in Rwanda.

Remarks to Military Personnel in Baghdad
April 7, 2009

The President. Thank you. Thank you, guys. Hooah!

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Let me say, Multi-National Force—Iraq; Multi-National Corps—Iraq; Multi-National Security Transition Command—Iraq; First Corps; America's Corps Band: Thanks to all of you. Listen, I am so honored.

Audience member. We love you.

The President. I love you back. I am honored and grateful to be with all of you. And I'm not going to talk long because I want to shake as many hands as I can, and I've been talking

all week. [*Laughter*] But there's a couple of things I want to say. Number one, thank you.

Audience member. You're welcome.

The President. You know, when I was at Camp Lejeune, I spoke about what it means for America to see our best and brightest, our finest young men and women serve us. And what I said then is something that I want to repeat to you, which is: You have performed brilliantly in every mission that has been given to you.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Under enormous strain and under enormous sacrifice, through controversy and difficulty and politics, you've kept your eyes focused on just doing your job. And because of that, every mission that's been assigned—from getting rid of Saddam, to reducing violence, to stabilizing the country, to facilitating elections—you have given Iraq the opportunity to stand on its own as a democratic country. That is an extraordinary achievement, and for that you have the thanks of the American people. That's point number one.

Point number two is, this is going to be a critical period, these next 18 months. I was just discussing this with your commander, but I think it's something that all of you know. It is time for us to transition to the Iraqis. They need to take responsibility for their country and for their sovereignty, and in order for them to do that, they have got to make political accommodations. They're going to have to decide that they want to resolve their differences through constitutional means and legal means. They are going to have to focus on providing government services that encourage confidence among their citizens.

All those things they have to do; we can't do it for them. But what we can do is make sure that we are a stalwart partner, that we are working alongside them, that we are committed to their success, that in terms of training their security forces, training their civilian forces in order to achieve a more effective government, they know that they have a steady partner with us.

And so just as we thank you for what you've already accomplished, I want to say thank you because you will be critical in terms of us being able to make sure that Iraq is stable, that it is not a safe haven for terrorists, that it is a good neighbor and a good ally, and we can start bringing our folks home. So now is not the time to lose focus. We have to be even more focused than we've been in order to achieve success.

The last point I want to make is, I know how hard it's been on a lot of you. You've been away from your families, many of you for multiple rotations. You've seen buddies of yours injured, and you remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. There are probably some people here who have seen children born and have been missing watching them grow up. There are many of you who have listened to your spouse and the extraordinary sacrifices that they have to make when you're gone.

And so I want you to know that Michelle and myself are doing everything—[*applause*]—are doing everything we can to provide additional support for military families. The Federal budget that I have introduced increases support for military families. We are going to do everything required to make sure that the commitment we make to our veterans is met and that people don't have to fight for what they have earned as a consequence of their service.

The main point I want to make is, we have not forgotten what you have already done. We are grateful for what you will do. And as long as I am in the White House, you are going to get the support that you need and the thanks that you deserve from a grateful nation.

So thank you very much everybody. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:08 p.m. in Al Faw Palace at Camp Victory.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq in Baghdad

April 7, 2009

President Obama. Well, thank you very much. I'm just going to make a short statement. I've just had very productive discussions with Prime Minister Maliki. I'm glad that I could come back to Iraq. It's important for me to speak directly to the Prime Minister, as well as other Iraqi leaders. And it's obviously a great honor to pay tribute to our troops, our diplomats, as well as Iraqis who have fought side by side with Americans.

I've arrived in Baghdad a day after—around the bombings that killed many innocent Iraqi civilians. And our hearts go out to the victims of this senseless violence, as well as their families. But I remain convinced that our shared resolve and commitment to progress is greater than the obstacles that stand in our way.

But we should not be distracted, because we have made enormous progress working alongside the Iraqi Government over the last few months. Overall, violence continues to be down. There's been movement on important political questions. But we have been reminded that there's more work to do.

I communicated to the Prime Minister that we are strongly committed to an Iraq that is sovereign and stable and self-reliant. And as Prime Minister Maliki was already aware, we have committed ourselves to a strategy that ensures a orderly, responsible transition from U.S. and coalition security forces to Iraqi security forces.

I've made it clear to my commanders that we need to be flexible but focused on training and equipping Iraqi security forces so that they can take the lead in dealing with security threats in their country. And the drawdown that will take place will, ultimately, result in the removal of all U.S. troops by 2011.

The second point of discussion was to indicate that we strongly support political steps to be taken to resolve differences between various factions within Iraq and to ensure a more peaceful and prosperous future.

Again, we've seen very good progress, but going forward, it's absolutely critical that all Iraqis are fully integrated into the Government and the security forces. We also want to work with the Prime Minister to deliver basic services to the Iraqi people, and I know that's something that he cares deeply about. And finally, we discussed how important it is to work together to deal with some of the regional issues that, ultimately, will be important to Iraq's security.

I just came from Turkey, for example, which I think has been working much more effectively and cooperatively in dealing with issues in northern Iraq. And we want to continue to foster good relations not just with Turkey, but with all of the countries in the region.

So as we carry out this strategy, we'll be working closely not only with the Prime Minister and his Government but also with President Talabani and all of the other key Government leaders. We'll do so in a spirit of partnership. The U.S. pursues no claims on Iraqis' territory and resources. We respect Iraqi sovereignty and the sacrifices that you have made for your country. And we seek a full transition to Iraqi responsibility for the security and prosperity of the nation.

The American people, through its troops, through civilians, have made enormous sacrifices here in Iraq. But they do so with the knowledge that they have stood alongside the Iraqi people in creating a more stable and prosperous country. And they are proud of the work that they've done, and I am proud and speak for them when I say that we want to continue to advance progress here in Iraq. And I look forward to the partnership with the Iraqi Government and the Iraqi people in making this happen.

Prime Minister Maliki. Thank you, Mr. Obama. I welcome you in Iraq, that you—that was a station after a very good trip for you. We discussed a lot of things regarding fixing a lot of the regional and international problems. The discussion with Mr. Obama included a lot of the bilateral issues that we insisted that he should continue to include all type of areas

like scientific, social, et cetera. And we also committed to whatever had been achieved from democracy and the SOFA agreement.

We also talked about that dialog should be the only way to resolve any issue, whether it was between the Iraqi society components or in the region. We achieved a lot of things in Iraq now: the democratic process; we commit to our Constitution. We want to go forward to benefit the country in this direction.

We assured the President that all the progress that was made in the security area will continue so we will be able to continue our building effort, our progress in Iraq. Iraq that now is based on increased security and increased stability, look forward to international companies and to other countries to participate in investing in the country. The partnerships that were created and the agreements that were signed will be the base for the cooperation to improve our relationship.

I appreciate very much the call for dialog that President Obama mentioned, especially between East and West, between Islam and Christianity, and also work to solve the Palestinian issue that will help reduce violence in the area drastically. It will help in giving people their rights, also produce peace that we've been looking forward for a few years. We also thank President Obama for his willingness to help in the resolutions that were issued against Iraq in the previous period.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:28 p.m. at Camp Victory. Prime Minister Maliki spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Roundtable Discussion on the Home Mortgage Industry
April 9, 2009

All right. Well, thank you so much for taking the time to join us. We are here with a wonderful group of homeowners. And I think for so many people around this country, the essence of the American Dream is owning your own home, being able to have that piece of property that is yours, that allows you to raise your kids, that represents your single biggest investment. And obviously, one of the triggers of the financial crisis and now the economic crisis that we've suffered is that because in some areas housing got—housing values got way overheated, in some cases you had a lack of regulation that allowed all sorts of complex financial instruments take advantage of homeowners. We have seen a collapse in the housing market, a precipitous drop in values, and that led to a lot of the problems in the financial markets.

Here's the good news. At the beginning of this administration, we said we are—we were going to tackle directly the problems that homeowners were experiencing and figure out ways in which we could provide them assistance in reducing their interest rates, modifying their loans so that they would be in a position to stay in their homes and reduce their monthly payments. And around the table here you see some wonderful families who have taken advantage of what are now historically low mortgage rates, brought about in part by some extraordinary actions by the Federal Reserve, but also brought about by the housing plan that Tim Geithner and Shaun Donovanhelped to design.

What you've seen now is rates are as low as they've been since 1971. Three-quarters of the American people get their mortgages through a Fannie Mae/Freddie Mac qualified loan. And as a consequence of us being able to reduce the interest rates that are available, we have now seen some extraordinary jumps in the rate of mortgage refinancings.

And everybody here represents families who have saved hundreds of dollars a month, thousands of dollars a year in some cases, and that's money directly in their pocket. More importantly, what it's allowed them to do is to consolidate their loans in some cases, reduce the length of their mortgages in other cases. It has given them the kind of security and stability in their mortgage payments that a lot more people can take advantage of.

So the main message that we want to send today is, there are 7 to 9 million people across the country who right now could be taking advantage of lower mortgage rates. That is money in their pocket. And we estimate that the average family can get anywhere from $1,600 to $2,000 a year in savings by taking advantage of these various mortgage programs that have been put in place.

We've already seen a substantial jump, 88 percent increase in refinancings over the last month. We've seen Fannie Mae refinance $77 billion of mortgages in March, which is their highest volume in one month since 2003. And rates on 30-year mortgages have dropped to an alltime low of 4.78 percent.

So we are at a time where people can really take advantage of this. And what we want to do is to send a message that if you are having problems with your mortgage, and even if you're not and you just want to save some money, you can go to makinghomeaffordable.gov—makinghomeaffordable.gov. And the way the web site is designed, you can plug in your information and immediately find out whether or not you are potentially eligible for one of these mortgage refinancings.

Now, we are in the process of rolling out some additional phases to the program. Everybody here represent responsible homeowners who made their payments, who have jobs and income that support their mortgages. In some cases, people may have had difficulties because they lost a job, somebody in their family got sick, they may have missed some payments. And in those cases we also want to be helpful, and we are putting in place a loan modification program, working with banks, working with services, that will allow other folks who are closer to losing their home in a stronger position in the future.

So there are a range of different programs that are available for a range of different types of borrowers. The main message we want to send today is, is that the programs that have been put in place can help responsible folks who have been making their payments, who are not looking for a handout, but this allows them to make some changes that will leave money in their pockets and leave them more secure in their homes. So we hope that everybody takes advantage of it. Again, the web site is makinghomeaffordable.gov—is that right?—makinghomeaffordable.gov, so get on the web site, find out what's available.

Last point we want to make. As people have become aware that the Government is helping to promote refinancing, we're starting to see some scam artists out there who are contacting people saying, "You can refinance your home. The Government has got a program; we're ready to help. Oh, but by the way, first you've got to pay some money." I just want everybody who is watching today to know that if somebody is asking you for money up front before they help you with your refinancing, it's probably a scam.

So take advantage of makinghomeaffordable.gov, and that will allow you to figure out exactly how to proceed on this in a way that's making you money, saving you money, as opposed to costing you money.

All right. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner; and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Shaun L.S. Donovan.

Remarks on Veterans Health Care
April 9, 2009

Thank you, John, for your outstanding service, and your friendship is greatly appreciated. I want to thank my two outstanding Secretaries who are behind me, Bob Gates, who is doing just an extraordinary job over at the Pentagon, and General Shinseki, now Secretary Shinseki, who has served our country with extraordinary valor.

I also want to acknowledge all the wounded warriors and veterans and all those who care

for them who are here today. You make us very, very proud. To the VSO and MSO leaders who work hard on behalf of those who serve this Nation, thank you for your advocacy and your hard work. As I look out in the audience, especially seeing these folks in their uniforms, I am reminded of the fact that we have the best fighting force in world history, and the reason we do is because of all of you. And so I'm very grateful for what you've done to protect and serve this country.

It is good to be back. We've had a productive week working to advance America's interests around the world. We worked to renew our alliances to enhance our common security. We collaborated with other nations to take steps towards rebuilding the global economy, which will revitalize our own.

And before coming home, I stopped to visit with our men and women who are serving bravely in Iraq. First and foremost, I wanted to say thank you to them on behalf of a grateful nation. They've faced extraordinary challenges, and they have performed brilliantly in every mission that's been given to them. They have given Iraq the opportunity to stand on its own as a democratic country, and that is a great gift. You know, we often talk about ideals like sacrifice and honor and duty. But these men and women, like the men and women who are here, embody it. They have made sacrifices many of us cannot begin to imagine.

We're talking about men like Specialist Jake Altman and Sergeant Nathan Dewitt, two of the soldiers who I had the honor to meet when I was in Baghdad. In 2007, as Specialist Altman was clearing mines so that other soldiers might travel in safety, he lost his hand when an IED struck his vehicle. And at Walter Reed, he asked to relearn the skills necessary to perform his duties with a prosthetic so that he could rejoin his old battalion. Sergeant Dewitt was severely injured in an attack last September, but he refused to let his injuries stop him from giving first aid to his wounded comrades. Today, they're both back alongside their fellow soldiers in their old units.

And we're talking about women like Tammy Duckworth, who I think is here. Tammy, where are you? There you are—a great friend who lost her legs when a rocket struck the Black Hawk helicopter she was piloting over Iraq. And when she returned home, she continued to serve her country heading the Department of Veterans Affairs in Illinois, and she serves her country still as my nominee for Assistant Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

We're talking about heroes like all the servicemembers and veterans of the United States Armed Forces, including the veterans who've joined us here today, many who gave up much, yet signed up to give more, many with their own battles still to come, all with their own stories to tell.

For their service and sacrifice, warm words of thanks from a grateful nation are more than warranted, but they aren't nearly enough. We also owe our veterans the care they were promised and the benefits that they have earned. We have a sacred trust with those who wear the uniform of the United States of America. It's a commitment that begins at enlistment, and it must never end.

But we know that for too long, we've fallen short of meeting that commitment. Too many wounded warriors go without the care that they need. Too many veterans don't receive the support that they've earned. Too many who once wore our Nation's uniform now sleep in our Nation's streets. It's time to change all that. It's time to give our veterans a 21st century VA. Over the past few months, we've made much progress towards that end, and today I'm pleased to announce some new progress.

Under the leadership of Secretary Gates and Secretary Shinseki, the Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs have taken a first step towards creating one unified lifetime electronic health record for members of our armed services that will contain their administrative and medical information, from the day they first enlist to the day that they are laid to rest.

Currently, there is no comprehensive system in place that allows for a streamlined transition of health records between DOD and the VA. And that results in extraordinary hardship for a awful lot of veterans who end up finding their records lost, unable to get their benefits processed in a timely fashion. I can't tell you how

many stories that I heard during the course of the last several years, first as a United States Senator and then as a candidate, about veterans who were finding it almost impossible to get the benefits that they had earned despite the fact that their disabilities or their needs were evident for all to see.

And that's why I'm asking both Departments to work together to define and build a seamless system of integration with a simple goal: When a member of the Armed Forces separates from the military, he or she will no longer have to walk paperwork from a DOD duty station to a local VA health center; their electronic records will transition along with them and remain with them forever.

Now, this would represent a huge step towards modernizing the way health care is delivered and benefits are administered for our Nation's veterans. It would cut through redtape and reduce the number of administrative mistakes. It would allow all VA sites access to a veteran's complete military medical record, giving them the information they need to deliver high-quality care. And it would do all this with the strictest and most rigorous standards of privacy and security, so that our veterans can have confidence that their medical records can only be shared at their direction.

Now, the care that our veterans receive should never be hindered by budget delays. I've shared this concern with Secretary Shinseki, and we have worked together to support advanced funding for veterans' medical care. What that means is a timely and predictable flow of funding from year to year, but more importantly, that means better care for our veterans. And I was pleased to see that the budget resolution passed by the Senate supports this concept in a bipartisan manner.

I'm also pleased that the budget resolutions adopted by both Houses of Congress preserve priorities that I outlined in my budget, priorities that will go a long way towards building that 21st century VA that we're looking for. The 2010 budget includes the largest, single-year increase in VA funding in three decades. And all told, we will increase funding by $25 billion over the next 5 years. This budget doesn't just signify increased funding for the VA health care program; it significantly expands coverage so that 500,000 more veterans who have previously been denied it will receive it, and it strengthens care and services across a broad range of areas.

Because the nightmares of war don't always end when our loved ones return home, this budget also meets the mental health needs of our wounded warriors. Untold thousands of service men and women returning from Iraq and Afghanistan suffer from Posttraumatic Stress Disorder or other serious psychological injury. And the growing incidence of suicide among active military returning veterans is disturbing. Sometimes the deadliest wounds are the ones you cannot see, and we cannot afford to let the unseen wounds go untreated. And that's why this budget dramatically increases funding for mental health screening and treatment at all levels. It increases the number of vet centers and mobile health clinics, expanding access to this needed care in rural areas. And it helps reduce the stigma of seeking care by adding mental health professionals to educate veterans and their families about their injuries and their options.

And because thousands of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans have suffered from traumatic brain injury, one of the signature injuries of these wars, this budget improves services for cognitive injuries. And many with TBI have never been evaluated by a physician. And because such injuries can often have long-term impacts that only show up down the road, this funding will help ensure they receive the ongoing care they need.

Because we all share the shame of 154,000 veterans going homeless on any given night, this budget also funds a pilot program with non-for-profit organizations to make sure that veterans at risk of losing their homes have a roof over their heads. And we will not rest until we reach a day when not one single veteran falls into homelessness.

Finally, this budget recognizes that our veterans deserve something more, an equal chance to reach for the very dream they defend. It's the chance America gave to my grandfather, who enlisted after Pearl Harbor and went on to march in Patton's army. When

he came home, he went to college on the GI bill, which made it possible for him and so many veterans like him to live out their own version of the American Dream. And now it's our turn to help guarantee this generation the same opportunity that the greatest generation enjoyed by providing every returning servicemember with a real chance to afford a college education. And by providing the resources to effectively implement the post-9/11 GI bill, that is what this budget does.

And even as we care for veterans who've served this country, Bob Gates has helped us design a budget that does more for our soldiers, more for their families, and more for our military. It fully protects and properly funds the increase to our Army and Marine force strength and halts reductions in the Air Force and Navy, allowing fewer deployments and more time between each. It builds on care for our wounded warriors and our investments in medical research and development. It deepens our commitment to improve the quality of life for military families—military childcare, spousal support, and education—because they're deployed when their loved one gets deployed.

On my visit to Baghdad this week, I was inspired all over again by the men and women in our armed services. They're proud of the work they're doing. And we are all deeply proud of them. And through their service, they are living out the ideals that stir something deep within the American character: honor, sacrifice, and commitment to a higher purpose and to one another.

That, after all, is what led them to wear the uniform in the first place, their unwavering belief in America. And now we must serve them as well as they've served us. And as long as we are fortunate to have leaders like Secretary Gates and Secretary Shinseki, and as long as I am Commander in Chief, I promise that we will work tirelessly to meet that mission and make sure that all those who wear this Nation's uniform know this: When you come home to America, America will be there for you.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:54 a.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Sgt. Maj. John L. Estrada, USMC (Ret.), former Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, who introduced the President; and Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting a Supplemental Appropriations Request for Ongoing Military, Diplomatic, and Intelligence Operations

April 9, 2009

Dear Madam Speaker:

We face a security situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan that demands urgent attention. The Taliban is resurgent and al Qaeda threatens America from its safe haven along the Afghan-Pakistan border.

With that reality as my focus, today I send to the Congress a supplemental appropriations request totaling $83.4 billion that will fund our ongoing military, diplomatic, and intelligence operations. Nearly 95 percent of these funds will be used to support our men and women in uniform as they help the people of Iraq to take responsibility for their own future—and work to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The rest of the money will fund a variety of defense and international efforts that will help to use all the elements of our power to confront the threats to our security—from securing loose nuclear weapons to combating fear and want under repressive regimes.

In the past, the Congress has moved expeditiously to approve funding for our Armed Forces. I urge the Congress to do so once more. I also urge the Congress to focus on the needs of our troops and our national security, and not to use the supplemental to pursue unnecessary spending. I want the Congress to send me a

focused bill, and to do so quickly. When this request returns to me as legislation ready to be signed, it should remain focused on our security. It is important that we follow the same approach we applied to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and keep extraneous and unnecessary projects out of this legislation.

As I noted when first I introduced my budget in February, this is the last planned war supplemental. Since September 2001, the Congress has passed 17 separate emergency funding bills totaling $822.1 billion for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. After 7 years of war, the American people deserve an honest accounting of the cost of our involvement in our ongoing military operations.

We must break that recent tradition and include future military costs in the regular budget so that we have an honest, more accurate, and fiscally responsible estimate of Federal spending. And we should not label military costs as emergency funds so as to avoid our responsibility to abide by the spending limitations set forth by the Congress. After years of budget gimmicks and wasteful spending, it is time to end the era of irresponsibility in Washington. In this request, we are honest about the costs we will bear as a nation, and we will use our resources wisely and responsibly to meet the threats of our time and keep our Nation safe and secure.

There is no question of the resolve of our military women and men. Yet, in Afghanistan, that resolve has not been matched by a comprehensive strategy and sufficient resources. This funding request will ensure that the full force of the United States—our military, intelligence, diplomatic, and economic power—are engaged in an overall effort to defeat al Qaeda and uproot the safe haven from which it plans and trains for attacks on the homeland and on our allies. At the same time that we are increasing our troop commitment, we will employ the necessary civilian resources to build Afghan governance capacity and self-sufficiency.

As the United States moves forward with our mission, we are asking our friends and allies to join us with a renewed commitment. As I made clear on my recent trip to Europe, the threat posed by al Qaeda is international in scope; the response to the threat also should be international. Going forward with this strategy, we will establish and regularly assess military and civilian capacity, checking progress through clear measurements to ensure an ongoing informed assessment and accountability. I have asked my National Security Advisor, General Jim Jones, to oversee this effort and to work with the Congress on the development of these standards for progress.

In Iraq, violence has been reduced substantially because of the skilled efforts of our troops and the Iraqi people's commitment to peace. The threat of terrorism in Iraq has been dealt a serious blow. Iraqis are prepared to take responsibility for their own future through a peaceful political process. Because of this, we are positioned to move forward with a responsible drawdown of our combat forces, transferring security to Iraq's forces. Under the Strategic Framework Agreement and Security Agreement, Iraqi personnel have taken the lead in security operations and will continue to handle greater responsibility.

Stability and security depend on responsive, capable, and accountable governments. This request includes funds to help create political and economic stability in post-conflict areas, assist Afghans and Iraqis to protect and sustain their infrastructure, and build their capacity for more responsive and transparent governance. This request also will enable military commanders to respond to urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction needs in their areas of responsibility. We provide funds for the extraordinary security and costs associated with supporting U.S. diplomatic activity in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

The request also increases funding to provide wounded servicemembers with the highest quality support and care, and provides additional compensation to our troops for their service in hazardous, life-threatening areas.

This request reflects the reality of our day and age: We need to use all the elements of our power—economic and diplomatic as well as military—to confront threats to our security.

Thank you for your consideration of this funding request and for your steadfast support for our servicemembers and their families.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

Remarks Following a Meeting With Senior Economic Advisers and an Exchange With Reporters
April 10, 2009

The President. Well, first of all, happy Easter and happy Passover. I'm sorry that you guys, like us, are working today.

We just had a terrific conversation with Ben Bernanke, Sheila Bair, and our entire regulatory group to talk about progress that we're making on the economy. And I wanted to just give you a little bit of a sense of the efforts that we've been making in stabilizing the financial markets.

And I want to thank SEC Chair Mary Schapiro, as well as Comptroller of the Currency John Dugan, for joining us. They weren't with us the last time we met.

We discussed ongoing stabilization of the financial system and the steps that have already been taken. I spoke yesterday about the progress that's been made in the housing market. As a consequence of some excellent work by Ben and some coordinated activities between the various agencies, what we've seen is mortgage interest rates go down to historic lows, and we've seen a very significant pick-up in refinancings. That has the effect of not only putting money in the pockets of people, but also contributing to stabilization of the housing market.

We discussed the public-private investment mechanisms that we have set up, so that we can start getting some of these toxic assets off the books. And all the agencies here have been involved in further refining the ideas and making them work effectively. And we feel confident that even as we're dealing with the problems within the banking system, that we're also addressing some of the problems in the nonbank financial system that was such a huge proportion of our credit flow when it came to things like auto loans and credit cards and so forth.

We feel very good about the progress that we're making in unlocking lending in some particular markets, for example, the small business area. Some of you will recall that a couple of weeks ago, we made a presentation about how we were going to help thaw lending to small businesses, and I'm pleased to discover that because of our actions, we've seen a 20 percent increase in the largest SBA loans program in the last month alone.

And what that means is that small businesses are starting to get money that allows them to keep their doors open, make payroll, and that is going to contribute to overall economic growth, as well as help make sure that people are able to keep their jobs.

And we have also seen this month people starting to get their first checks in terms of the tax cuts that were initiated through the recovery package. And when you combine it with the other efforts that are being made across the country for infrastructure projects, for the kinds of innovative energy programs that were part of the recovery package, what you're starting to see is glimmers of hope across the economy.

Now, we have always been very cautious about prognosticating, and that's not going to change just because it's Easter. The economy is still under severe stress, and obviously, during these holidays we have to keep in mind that whatever we do ultimately has to translate into economic growth and jobs and rising incomes for the American people. And right now, we're still seeing a lot of job losses, a lot of hardship, people finding themselves in very difficult situations either because they've lost their home, they've seen their savings deteriorate, and they're still at risk of losing their jobs.

So we've still got a lot of work to do. And over the next several weeks, you will be seeing additional actions by the administration. What I just wanted to emphasize today, and I think that Ben Bernanke and Sheila Bair and our economic team as a whole would agree, we're starting

to see progress. And if we stick with it, if we don't flinch in the face of some difficulties, then I feel absolutely convinced that we are going to get this economy back on track.

So—all right. Thank you very much, guys.

[*At this point, many reporters began speaking at the same time.*]

The President. Thank you, guys. Thank you, guys. Appreciate it.

National Economy

Q. Sir, are you saying the recession is abating?

The President. I'm saying we're seeing progress.

Q. You're saying what?

The President. I've said that we're seeing progress.

Okay, thank you, guys. Have a wonderful holiday.

Q. Thank you, sir.

The First Family's Dog

Q. When is the dog coming?

The President. Oh, man, now, that's top secret. [*Laughter*] That's top secret.

[*Many reporters began speaking at the same time.*]

White House Easter Egg Roll

The President. Exactly. No, no, no, this is tightly held. And any of you going to be at the Easter Egg Roll?

Q. Oh, yes.

The President. That's big. [*Laughter*] That's big. So we look forward to seeing you on Monday. Thanks, guys.

Q. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:53 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

The President's Weekly Address
April 11, 2009

I speak to you today during a time that is holy and filled with meaning for believers around the world. Earlier this week, Jewish people gathered with family and friends to recite the stories of their ancestors' struggle and ultimate liberation. Tomorrow, Christians of all denominations will come together to rejoice and remember the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

These are two very different holidays with their own very different traditions, but it seems fitting that we mark them both during the same week. For in a larger sense, they are both moments of reflection and renewal. They are both occasions to think more deeply about the obligations we have to ourselves and the obligations we have to one another, no matter who we are, where we come from, or what faith we practice.

This idea that we're all bound up, as Martin Luther King once said, "in a single garment of destiny," is a lesson of all the world's great religions. And it never has been more important for us to reaffirm that lesson than it is today, at a time when we face tests and trials unlike any we've seen in our time: an economic crisis that recognizes no borders; violent extremism that's claimed the lives of innocent men, women, and children from Manhattan to Mumbai; an unsustainable dependence on foreign oil and other sources of energy that pollute our air and water and threaten our planet; the proliferation of the world's most dangerous weapons; the persistence of deadly disease; and the recurrence of age-old conflicts.

These are challenges that no single nation, no matter how powerful, can confront alone. The United States must lead the way. But our best chance to solve these unprecedented problems comes from acting in concert with other nations. And that's why I met with leaders of the G–20 nations to ensure that the world's largest economies take strong and unified action in the face of the global economic

crisis. Together, we've taken steps to stimulate growth, restore the flow of credit, open up markets, and dramatically reform our financial regulatory system to prevent such crises from occurring again, steps that will lead to job creation at home.

It is only by working together that we will finally defeat 21st-century security threats like Al Qaida. So it was heartening that our NATO allies united in Strasbourg behind our strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan and contributed important resources to support our efforts there.

It's only by coordinating with countries around the world that we will stop the spread of the world's most dangerous weapons. And that is why I laid out a strategy in Prague for us to work with Russia and other nations to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons, to secure nuclear materials from terrorists, and ultimately, to free the world from the menace of a nuclear nightmare.

And it's only by building a new foundation of mutual trust that we will tackle some of our most entrenched problems. And that's why, in Turkey, I spoke to Members of Parliament and university students about rising above the barriers of race, region, and religion that too often divide us.

With all that's at stake today, we cannot afford to talk past one another. We can't afford to allow old differences to prevent us from making progress in areas of common concern. We can't afford to let walls of mistrust stand. Instead, we have to find and build on our mutual interests. For it is only when people come together and seek common ground that some of that mistrust can begin to fade. And that's where progress begins.

Make no mistake: We live in a dangerous world, and we must be strong and vigilant in the face of these threats. But let us not allow whatever differences we have with other nations to stop us from coming together around those solutions that are essential to our survival and success.

As we celebrate Passover, Easter, and this time of renewal, let's find strength in our shared resolve and purpose in our common aspirations. And if we can do that, then not only will we fulfill the sacred meaning of these holy days, but we will fulfill the promise of our country as a leader around the world.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:35 p.m. on April 10 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on April 11. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 10 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on April 11.

Statement on the Rescue of Richard Phillips off the Coast of Somalia
April 12, 2009

I am very pleased that Captain Phillips has been rescued and is safely on board the USS *Boxer*. His safety has been our principal concern, and I know this is a welcome relief to his family and his crew.

I am also very proud of the efforts of the U.S. military and many other departments and agencies who worked tirelessly to secure Captain Phillips's safe recovery.

We remain resolved to halt the rise of piracy in this region. To achieve that goal, we must continue to work with our partners to prevent future attacks, be prepared to interdict acts of piracy, and ensure that those who commit acts of piracy are held accountable for their crimes.

I share the country's admiration for the bravery of Captain Phillips and his selfless concern for his crew. His courage is a model for all Americans.

Remarks at the White House Easter Egg Roll
April 13, 2009

Hello, everybody. That's Malia, our technical adviser. [*Laughter*]

It is wonderful to see all of you today. Welcome. I hope everybody had a wonderful Easter. This is one of the greatest White House traditions, because it reminds us that this is the people's house. And to see so many children out here having a great time just fills Michelle and myself and the entire family with a whole lot of joy.

So I'm not really in charge here today. My sole job, in addition to thanking Fergie for that wonderful rendition of our national anthem and thanking my buddy the Easter Bunny for being here, is to introduce my First Lady, your First Lady, Michelle Obama.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to entertainer Stacy "Fergie" Ferguson. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks at the Department of Transportation
April 13, 2009

Thank you, everybody. I hope everybody had a wonderful Easter. I just came from the Easter Egg Roll, and it was a spectacular outing. All the kids were out there having fun, and it reminds us of why we do the work we do.

Before I discuss the purpose of my visit to the Department of Transportation today, I want to take a moment to say how pleased I am about the rescue of Captain Phillips and his safe return to the USS *Boxer* this weekend. His safety has been our principal concern, and I know this came as a welcome relief to his family and his crew.

I had a chance to talk to his wife yesterday and, as she put it, she couldn't imagine a better Easter than seeing his safe return. And I'm very proud of the efforts of the U.S. military and many other departments and agencies that worked tirelessly to resolve this situation. I share our Nation's admiration for Captain Phillips's courage and leadership and selfless concern for his crew.

And I want to be very clear that we are resolved to halt the rise of privacy [piracy]* in that region. And to achieve that goal we're going to have to continue to work with our partners to prevent future attacks, we have to continue to be prepared to confront them when they arise, and we have to ensure that those who commit acts of piracy are held accountable for their crimes.

Now, as we work to ensure America's safety out on the seas, I want to discuss what we're doing to restore economic security here at home to revitalize our Nation's infrastructure and create good jobs across America. It has been nearly 3 months since I first took office, and I think it's fair to say that we've been busy. Faced with an extraordinary economic crisis, we've responded with extraordinary action, action that's both unprecedented in scale and unprecedented in its speed.

We developed plans to stabilize our housing market, to unfreeze our credit markets, and to ensure the survival of our auto industry in this new century. We passed a budget that cuts our deficit in half while making investments to spur long-term growth and lasting prosperity. And because we know that people are hurting right now, and we need to create jobs and get money into people's pockets right now, we passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the most sweeping economic recovery plan in history; a plan to save or create 3.5 million jobs, putting Americans back to work doing the work America needs done, and to

* White House correction.

give a tax cut to 95 percent of working Americans.

Today, I think it's safe to say that this plan is beginning to work. We see it in the clean energy companies rehiring workers, in police departments cancelling planned layoffs, in health care clinics planning to expand to care for more folks in need. We see it in the 120 million families who are already taking home larger paychecks because of our Making Work Pay tax cut. And we see it particularly in the work of this Department, in the plans underway to rebuild crumbling roads and bridges, modernize our airports and shipyards, develop high-speed rail networks, and restore aging public transit systems. All told, we are making the largest new investment in America's infrastructure since President Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System back in the 1950s.

But what is most remarkable about this effort, and what I'm here to talk about today, isn't just the size of our investment, or the number of projects we're investing in, it's how quickly, efficiently, and responsibly those investments have been made.

Today, because these projects are getting approved more quickly than we thought, thanks to, in large part, the outstanding work of the TIGER team and folks here at the Department of Transportation, and because these projects are costing less than we thought, we can utter a sentence rarely heard in recent years: This government effort is coming in ahead of schedule and under budget.

Think about it, we passed the recovery plan less than 2 months ago. Two weeks later, I came here to DOT to announce that we would be investing $28 billion to rebuild and repair our highways, roads, and bridges. Work on the very first project, resurfacing Route 650 in Silver Springs, Maryland, began that very same day. People who'd been out of a job found themselves being called back to work.

And some of the crews are here today, and we want to thank them, and we're proud of them, because they're making the roads safer and some of your commutes a little bit better, and at the same time they're doing what they've always done, working really hard to support their families and living out the American Dream. So we appreciate you guys. Thank you.

About a week later, we had approved 500 more projects. Two weeks after that, we had approved another 1,000 projects. And today I'm proud to announce that we have approved the 2000th project, a project to widen an interstate and rebuild an overpass in Portage, Michigan, improving safety, reducing congestion, and boosting local businesses.

This project will start this summer, creating an estimated 900 jobs right away, and it will go into 2011, creating nearly twice that many jobs altogether before it's finished. So I want to acknowledge Governor Granholm, both for her leadership on this project and for her tireless work to strengthen Michigan's economy. And I'm pleased that Joe Biden, who's overseeing our recovery efforts, will be attending the groundbreaking for this project in June.

Now, some may have thought it would take months to get to this point. But in part because of the hard work and commitment of the people in this Department, we approved these 2,000 projects in just 41 days. So taken together, these projects will reduce the congestion that costs us nearly $80 billion a year; it will save some of the 14,000 people who lose their lives each year because of bad roads and driving conditions; it will create good jobs that pay well and can't be shipped overseas. By the end of next year, our investments in highway projects alone will create or save 150,000 jobs. I want to repeat that: 150,000 jobs, most of them in the private sector.

I'm pleased that work on some of these projects has already started and that many more will be underway by this summer. But I want to be very clear that while we're doing this with speed, we're also doing it with care. We've acted quickly, because our economy, losing hundreds of thousands of jobs each month, means we don't have a minute to waste. And we've acted with care because we don't have a single taxpayer dollar to waste either.

And that's why I appointed a proven and aggressive Inspector General to root out waste and fraud. That's why we created a web site called recovery.gov, so you can see exactly where your tax dollars are going, and soon you'll be able to click on the transportation section

and track the progress of every project underway.

And that's why I'm pleased to hear that in State after State across America, competition for these projects is so fierce, and contractors are doing such a good job cutting costs, that projects are consistently coming in under budget. The final bid for one road project in Connecticut was $8.4 million less than the State budgeted for. Another one in Louisiana was $4.7 million less. A project at BWI Airport will be completed for $8 million less than expected. Bids for projects in North Carolina have been 19 percent under budget. Colorado is reporting bids up to 30 percent less than they expected. And the officials in California have seen bids that are close to half as much as they had projected.

And because these projects are proceeding so efficiently, we now have more recovery dollars to go around. And that means we can fund more projects, revitalize more of our infrastructure, put more people back to work, and ensure that taxpayers get more value for their dollars.

Now, I have no illusion about how much work lies ahead and how hard it will be. The road to recovery is long; we will undoubtedly make some mistakes, we'll face some setbacks along the way, there will be some projects that don't work the way we want them to. But it is now clear that we're heading in the right direction. It's now clear that day by day, project by project, we are making progress.

We're doing what we've always done in this country. As President Johnson said more than 40 years ago when he signed the legislation creating this Department, the Department of Transportation, "America's history is a history of her transportation," of railroads that pushed frontiers, and waterways and highways that opened up markets, airplanes that connected us to one another and to the world.

Throughout our history, there have been times when a generation of Americans seized the chance to remake the face of this Nation. And this is one of those times. And that's what we're doing today, building a 21st century infrastructure that will create jobs, spur growth, and sustain an economy that creates shared and lasting prosperity.

So thank you to the folks here at DOT; you're doing an outstanding job. Thanks to Ray LaHood for being a terrific leader of the Department. And thank you to Joe Biden for helping to drive this thing home. And thanks to all the workers who are standing behind us. We don't want to keep them too long. They've already got their hard hats. [*Laughter*] They are going to go straight into their cars, and they're going to go back to work. So thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:52 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Richard Phillips, captain, MV *Maersk Alabama*, who was rescued from pirates off the coast of Somalia on April 12, and his wife Andrea; and Interior Department Inspector General Earl E. Devaney, Chair, Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden.

Statement on the Month of the Military Child
April 13, 2009

In 1986, April was designated as the Month of the Military Child, and I am proud to mark the special recognition the Department of Defense has given to military children.

Like all Americans, I am grateful to the brave men and women in uniform who are serving our Nation. They are the living embodiment of the ideals of sacrifice, honor, and duty that have always made this Nation great, and their sacrifice is their families' sacrifice too; their children, especially, display tremendous strength and courage each day, bravely bearing the burden of having a loved one serving in harm's way. They may move many times across the Nation and even around the world as they grow up. They may not see their loved ones for months on end. It is not easy, and Michelle and I, as well as the Vice President and

Dr. Jill Biden, admire and are deeply grateful to each and every one of them.

I call on all Americans to keep military children in their thoughts and prayers and to do their part to reach out to and support them and their families.

NOTE: The statement referred to Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden.

Memorandum on Promoting Democracy and Human Rights in Cuba
April 13, 2009

Memorandum for the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, and the Secretary of Commerce

Subject: Promoting Democracy and Human Rights in Cuba

The promotion of democracy and human rights in Cuba is in the national interest of the United States and is a key component of this Nation's foreign policy in the Americas. Measures that decrease dependency of the Cuban people on the Castro regime and that promote contacts between Cuban-Americans and their relatives in Cuba are means to encourage positive change in Cuba. The United States can pursue these goals by facilitating greater contact between separated family members in the United States and Cuba and increasing the flow of remittances and information to the Cuban people.

To pursue those ends, I direct the Secretary of the Treasury and the Secretary of Commerce, in consultation with the Secretary of State, to take such actions as necessary to:

(a) Lift restrictions on travel-related transactions for visits to a person's family member who is a national of Cuba by authorizing such transactions by a general license that shall:

- Define family members who may be visited to be persons within three degrees of family relationship (e.g., second cousins) and to allow individuals who share a common dwelling as a family with an authorized traveler to accompany them;
- Remove limitations on the frequency of visits;
- Remove limitations on the duration of a visit;
- Authorize expenditure amounts that are the same as non-family travel; and
- Remove the 44-pound limitation on accompanied baggage.

(b) Remove restrictions on remittances to a person's family member in Cuba by:

- Authorizing remittances to individuals within three degrees of family relationship (e.g., second cousins) provided that no remittances shall be authorized to currently prohibited members of the Government of Cuba or currently prohibited members of the Cuban Communist Party; Removing limits on frequency of remittances;
- Removing limits on the amount of remittances;
- Authorizing travelers to carry up to $3,000 in remittances; and
- Establishing general license for banks and other depository institutions to forward remittances.

(c) Authorize U.S. telecommunications network providers to enter into agreements to establish fiber-optic cable and satellite telecommunications facilities linking the United States and Cuba.

(d) License U.S. telecommunications service providers to enter into and operate under roaming service agreements with Cuba's telecommunications service providers.

(e) License U.S. satellite radio and satellite television service providers to engage in transactions necessary to provide services to customers in Cuba.

(f) License persons subject to U.S. jurisdiction to activate and pay U.S. and third-country service providers for telecommunications,

satellite radio, and satellite television services provided to individuals in Cuba, except certain senior Communist Party and Cuban government officials.

(g) Authorize, consistent with national security concerns, the export or reexport to Cuba of donated personal communications devices such as mobile phone systems, computers and software, and satellite receivers through a license exception.

(h) Expand the scope of humanitarian donations eligible for export through license exceptions by:

- Restoring clothing, personal hygiene items, seeds, veterinary medicines and supplies, fishing equipment and supplies, and soap-making equipment to the list of items eligible to be included in gift parcel donations;
- Restoring items normally exchanged as gifts by individuals in "usual and reasonable" quantities to the list of items eligible to be included in gift parcel donations;
- Expanding the scope of eligible gift parcel donors to include any individual;
- Expanding the scope of eligible gift parcel donees to include individuals other than Cuban Communist Party officials or Cuban government officials already prohibited from receiving gift parcels, or charitable, educational, or religious organizations not administered or controlled by the Cuban government; and
- Increasing the value limit on non-food items to $800.

This memorandum is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

BARACK OBAMA

Remarks on the National Economy
April 14, 2009

Thank you so much. It's good to be back. Thank you so much. Please, everybody, be seated. Well, to President DeGioia, thank you so much for the gracious introduction, and thanks for bringing your family—including J.T.—appreciate you. The—we're going to invite him over, hang out with the girls. [*Laughter*] He's a pretty good-looking young man. [*Laughter*]

To Mayor Adrian Fenty, who's doing such a great job in this city, thank you so much for your attendance. To Representative Donna Edwards, who is here and represents Maryland's Fourth District, thank you.

To Georgetown University students, it is great to see you. [*Applause*] Thank you. Yes, well, it is good to be back. I appeared in this room during the campaign and had a wonderful reception then, and it's wonderful to be back and be with all of you.

We're going to talk about the economy today. And I was telling President DeGioia this may be a slightly longer speech than I usually give, but it's a slightly bigger topic, and that is how we are going to deal with so many of our economic challenges.

You know, it's been 12 weeks now since my administration began. And I think that even our critics would agree that at the very least, we've been busy. [*Laughter*] In just under 3 months, we've responded to an extraordinary set of economic challenges with extraordinary action, action that's been unprecedented both in terms of its scale and its speed.

And I know that some have accused us of taking on too much at once. Others believe we haven't done enough. And many Americans are simply wondering how all of our different programs and policies fit together in a single, overarching strategy that will move this economy from recession to recovery and, ultimately, to prosperity.

So today I want to step back for a moment and explain our strategy as clearly as I can.

This is going to be prose and not poetry. I want to talk about what we've done, why we've done it, and what we have left to do. I want to update you on the progress we've made, but I also want to be honest about the pitfalls that may still lie ahead.

Most of all, I want every American to know that each action we take and each policy we pursue is driven by a larger vision of America's future, a future where sustained economic growth creates good jobs and rising incomes, a future where prosperity is fueled not by excessive debt or reckless speculation or fleeting profits, but is instead built by skilled, productive workers, by sound investments that will spread opportunity at home and allow this Nation to lead the world in the technologies and the innovation and discoveries that will shape the 21st century. That's the America I see. That's the America that Georgetown is preparing so many of you for. That is the future that I know that we can have.

Now, to understand how we get there, we first need to understand how we got here. Recessions are not uncommon. Markets and economies naturally ebb and flow, as we've seen many times in our history. But this recession is different; this recession was not caused by a normal downturn in the business cycle. It was caused by a perfect storm of irresponsibility and poor decisionmaking that stretched from Wall Street to Washington to Main Street.

As has been widely reported, it started in the housing market. During the course of the decade, the formula for buying a house changed. Instead of saving their pennies to buy their dream house, many Americans found that suddenly they could take out loans that by traditional standards their incomes just could not support. Others were tricked into signing these subprime loans by lenders who were trying to make a quick profit. The reason these loans were so readily available was that Wall Street saw big profits to be made. Investment banks would buy and package together these questionable mortgages into securities, arguing that by pooling the mortgages the risks had somehow been reduced. And credit agencies that are supposed to help investors determine the soundness of various investments stamped the securities with their safest rating when they should have been labeled "buyer beware."

And no one really knew what the actual value of these securities were; no one fully understood what the risks were. But since the housing market was booming and prices were rising, banks and investors just kept buying and selling them, always passing off the risk to someone else for a greater profit without having to take any of the ultimate responsibility. Banks took on more debt than they could handle.

The Government-chartered companies Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, whose traditional mandate was to help support traditional mortgages, decided to get in on the action by buying and holding billions of dollars of these securities. AIG, the biggest insurer in the world that had a very traditional insurance business that was very profitable, decided to make profits suddenly by selling billions of dollars of complicated financial instruments that supposedly insured these securities. Everybody was making record profits, except the wealth created was real only on paper. And as the bubble grew, there was almost no accountability or oversight from anyone in Washington.

Then the housing bubble burst. Home prices fell, people began to default on their subprime mortgages, and the value of all those loans and securities plummeted. Banks and investors couldn't find anyone to buy them. Greed gave way to fear. Investors pulled their money out of the market. Large financial institutions that didn't have enough money on hand to pay off all their obligations collapsed. Other banks held on tight to their money and simply stopped lending.

Now, this is when the crisis spread from Wall Street to Main Street. After all, the ability to get a loan is how you finance the purchase of everything from a home to a car to, as you all well very—know very well, a college education. It's how stores stock their shelves and farms buy equipment and businesses make payroll. So when banks stopped lending money, businesses started laying off workers. When laid-off workers had less money to spend, businesses were forced to lay off even more workers. When people couldn't get a car loan, a bad situation at the auto companies became even

worse. When people couldn't get home loans, the crisis in the housing market only deepened. Because the infected securities were being traded worldwide and other nations also had weak regulations, this recession soon became global. And when other nations can't afford to buy our goods, it slows our economy even further.

So this is the situation, the downward spiral that we confronted on the day that we took office. So our most urgent task has been to clear away the wreckage, repair the immediate damage to the economy, and do everything we can to prevent a larger collapse. And since the problems we face are all working off each other to feed a vicious economic downturn, we've had no choice but to attack all fronts of our economic crisis simultaneously.

Now, the first step was to fight a severe shortage of demand in the economy. So the Federal Reserve did this by dramatically lowering interest rates last year in order to boost investment. My administration and Congress boosted demand by passing the largest recovery plan in our Nation's history. It's a plan that's already in the process of saving or creating 3.5 million jobs over the next 2 years. It's putting money directly into people's pockets with a tax cut for 95 percent of working families; it's now showing up in paychecks across America. And to cushion the blow of this recession, we also provided extended unemployment benefits and continued health care coverage to Americans who've lost their jobs through no fault of their own.

Now, you will recall that some argued this recovery plan is a case of irresponsible Government spending, that it's somehow to blame for our long-term deficit projections, and that the Federal Government should be cutting instead of increasing spending right now. So I want to tackle this argument head on.

To begin with, economists on both the left and the right agree that the last thing a government should do in the middle of a recession is to cut back on spending. You see, when this recession began, many families sat around the kitchen table and tried to figure out where they could cut back, and so have many businesses. And this is a completely reasonable and understandable reaction. But if everybody—if everybody—if every family in America, if every business in America cuts back all at once, then no one is spending any money, which means there are no customers, which means there are more layoffs, which means that the economy gets even worse. That's why the Government has to step in and temporarily boost spending in order to stimulate demand. That's exactly what we're doing right now.

Now, second, I absolutely agree that our long-term deficit is a major problem that we have to fix. But the fact is that this recovery plan represents only a tiny fraction of that long-term deficit. As I'll discuss in a moment, the key to dealing with our long-term deficit and our national debt is to get a handle on out-of-control health care costs, not to stand idly by as the economy goes into free fall.

So the recovery plan has been the first step in confronting this economic crisis. The second step has been to heal our financial system so that credit is once again flowing to the businesses and families who rely on it.

The heart of this financial crisis is that too many banks and other financial institutions simply stopped lending money. In a climate of fear, banks were unable to replace their losses from some of those bad mortgages by raising new capital on their own, and they were unwilling to lend the money they did have because they were afraid that no one would pay it back. It's for this reason that the last administration used what they called the Troubled Asset Relief Program, or TARP, to provide these banks with temporary financial assistance in order to get them lending again.

Now, I understand that TARP is not popular, and I have to say that I don't agree with some of the ways the TARP program was managed, but I do agree with the broader rationale that we must provide banks with the capital and the confidence necessary to start lending again. And that's the purpose of the stress tests that will soon tell us how much additional capital will be needed to support lending at our largest banks. Ideally, these needs will be met by private investors who are willing to put in money to these banks. But where that's not possible, and banks require substantial

additional resources from the Government, then we will hold accountable those who are responsible, we'll force the necessary adjustments, we'll provide the support to clean up those bank balance sheets, and we will assure the continuity of a strong and viable institution that can serve our people and our economy.

Of course, there are some who differ with our approach. On the one hand, there are some who argue that the Government should stand back and simply let these banks fail, especially since in many cases it was their bad decisions that helped create the crisis in the first place. But whether we like it or not, history has shown repeatedly that when nations do not take early and aggressive action to get credit flowing again, they have crises that last years and years instead of months and months, years of low growth, years of low job creation, years of low investment, all of which cost these nations far more than a course of bold, upfront action.

And although there are a lot of Americans who understandably think that Government money would be better spent going directly to families and businesses instead of to banks—one of my most frequent questions in the letters that I get from constituents is, "Where's my bailout?"—and I understand the sentiment. It makes sense intuitively, and morally it makes sense, but the truth is that a dollar of capital in a bank can actually result in $8 or $10 of loans to families and businesses. So that's a multiplier effect that can ultimately lead to a faster pace of economic growth. That's why we have to fix the banks.

Now, on the other hand, there have been some who don't dispute that we need to shore up the banking system, but they suggest that we've been too timid in how we go about it. This is essentially the nationalization argument that some of you may have heard. And the argument says that the Federal Government should have already preemptively stepped in and taken over major financial institutions the way that the FDIC currently intervenes in smaller banks, and that our failure, my administration's failure, to do so is yet another example of Washington coddling Wall Street—"Why aren't you tougher on the banks?"

So let me be clear: The reason we have not taken this step has nothing to do with any ideological or political judgment we've made about Government involvement in banks. It's certainly not because of any concern we have for the management and shareholders whose actions helped to cause this mess. Rather, it's because we believe that preemptive Government takeovers are likely to end up costing taxpayers even more in the end, and because it's more likely to undermine than create confidence.

Governments should practice the same principle as doctors: First, do no harm. So rest assured, we will do whatever is necessary to get credit flowing again, but we will do so in ways that minimize risk to taxpayers and to the broader economy. To that end, in addition to the program to provide capital to the banks, we've launched a plan that will pair Government resources with private investment in order to clear away the old loans and securities, the so-called toxic assets that are also preventing our banks from lending money.

Now, what we've also learned during this crisis is that our banks aren't the only institutions affected by these toxic assets that are clogging the financial system. AIG, for example, is not a bank, it's an insurance company, as I mentioned. And yet, because it chose to insure billions of dollars worth of risky assets, essentially creating a hedge fund on top of an insurance company, its failure could threaten the entire financial system and freeze lending even more. And that's why, as frustrating as it is—and I promise you, nobody is more frustrated than me with AIG—[*laughter*]—I promise—we've had to provide support for AIG, because the entire system, as fragile as it is, could be profoundly endangered if AIG went into a liquidation bankruptcy.

It's also why we need new legal authority so that we have the power to intervene in such financial institutions, the same way that bankruptcy courts currently do with businesses that hit hard times but don't pose systemic risks. And that way we can restructure these businesses in an orderly way that doesn't induce panic in the financial system and, by the way, will allow us to restructure inappropriate bonus contracts without creating a perception the Government

can just change compensation rules on a whim.

This is also why we're moving aggressively to unfreeze markets and jump-start lending outside the banking system, where more than half of all lending in America actually takes place. To do this, we've started a program that will increase guarantees for small-business loans and unlock the market for auto loans and student loans. And to stabilize the housing market, we've launched a plan that will save up to 4 million responsible homeowners from foreclosure and help many millions more to refinance their homes.

In a few weeks, we will also reassess the state of Chrysler and General Motors, two companies with an important place in our history and a large footprint in our economy, but two companies that have also fallen on hard times.

Late last year, the companies were given transitional loans by the previous administration to tide them over as they worked to develop viable business plans. Unfortunately, the plans they developed fell short, so we've given them some additional time to work these complex issues through. And by the way, we owed that not to the executives whose bad bets contributed to the weakening of their companies, but to the hundreds of thousands of workers whose livelihoods hang in the balance; entire towns, entire communities, entire States are profoundly impacted by what happens in the auto industry.

Now, it is our fervent hope that in the coming weeks, Chrysler will find a viable partner; GM will develop a business plan that will put it on a path to profitability without endless support from American taxpayers. In the meantime, we're taking steps to spur demand for American cars and provide relief for autoworkers and their communities. And we will continue to reaffirm this Nation's commitment to a 21st century American auto industry that creates new jobs and builds the fuel-efficient cars and trucks that will carry us toward a clean energy future.

Finally, to coordinate a global response to this global recession, I went to the meeting of the G–20 nations in London the other week. Each nation has undertaken significant stimulus to spur demand. All agreed to pursue tougher regulatory reforms. We also agreed to triple the lending capacity of the International Monetary Fund, which, as many of you know, is an international financial institution supported by all the major economies, so that they can provide direct assistance to developing nations and vulnerable populations. That's not just charity; because America's success depends on whether other nations have the ability to buy what we sell, it's important that we pay attention to these emerging markets. We pledged to avoid the trade barriers and protectionism that hurts us all in the end. And we decided to meet again in the fall to gauge our progress and take additional steps if necessary.

So that's where we've been, that's what we've done in the last 3 months. All of these actions—the Recovery Act, the bank capitalization program, the housing plan, the strengthening of the nonbank credit market, the auto plan, and our work at the G–20—all have been necessary pieces of the recovery puzzle. They've been designed to increase aggregate demand, to get credit flowing again to families and businesses, and to help families and businesses ride out the storm. And taken together, these actions are starting to generate signs of economic progress.

Because of our recovery plan, schools and police departments have canceled planned layoffs; clean energy companies and construction companies are rehiring workers to build everything from energy efficient windows to new roads and highways. Our housing plan has helped lead to a spike in the number of homeowners who are taking advantage of historically low mortgage rates by refinancing, which is like putting a $2,000 tax cut in your pocket. Our program to support the market for auto loans and student loans has started to unfreeze this market and securitize more of this lending in the last few weeks. And small businesses are seeing a jump in loan activity for the first time in months.

Now, this is all welcome and encouraging news. It does not mean the hard times are over; 2009 will continue to be a difficult year for America's economy, and obviously, most

difficult for those who've lost their jobs. The severity of this recession will cause more job loss, more foreclosures, and more pain before it ends. The market will continue to rise and fall. Credit is still not flowing nearly as easily as it should. The process for restructuring AIG and the auto companies will involve difficult and sometimes unpopular choices; we are not finished yet on that front. And all of this means that there's much more work to be done. But all of this also means that you can continue to expect an unrelenting, unyielding, day-by-day effort from this administration to fight for economic recovery on all fronts.

But even as we continue to clear away the wreckage and address the immediate crisis, it is my firm belief that our next task, beginning now, is to make sure such a crisis never happens again. Even as we clean up balance sheets and get credit flowing again, even as people start spending and businesses start hiring—all that's going to happen—we have to realize that we cannot go back to the bubble-and-bust economy that led us to this point.

It is simply not sustainable to have a 21st century financial system that is governed by 20th century rules and regulations that allowed the recklessness of a few to threaten the entire economy. It is not sustainable to have an economy where in 1 year, 40 percent of our corporate profits came from a financial sector that was based on inflated home prices, maxed-out credit cards, overleveraged banks, and overvalued assets. It's not sustainable to have an economy where the incomes of the top 1 percent has skyrocketed while the typical working household has seen their incomes decline by nearly $2,000. That's just not a sustainable model for long-term prosperity.

For even as too many were out there chasing ever-bigger bonuses and short-term profits over the last decade, we continued to neglect the long-term threats to our prosperity: the crushing burden that the rising cost of health care is placing on families and businesses; the failure of our education system to prepare our workers for a new age; the progress that other nations are making on clean energy industries and technologies while we remain addicted to foreign oil; the growing debt that we're passing on to our children. Even after we emerge from the current recession, these challenges will still represent major obstacles that stand in the way of our success in the 21st century. So we've got a lot of work to do.

Now, there's a parable at the end of the Sermon on the Mount that tells the story of two men. The first built his house on a pile of sand, and it was soon destroyed when a storm hit. But the second is known as the wise man, for when "the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock"—it was founded upon a rock.

We cannot rebuild this economy on the same pile of sand. We must build our house upon a rock. We must lay a new foundation for growth and prosperity, a foundation that will move us from an era of borrow and spend to one where we save and invest, where we consume less at home and send more exports abroad.

It's a foundation built upon five pillars that will grow our economy and make this new century another American century: number one, new rules for Wall Street that will reward drive and innovation, not reckless risk-taking; number two, new investments in education that will make our workforce more skilled and competitive; number three, new investments in renewable energy and technology that will create new jobs and new industries; number four, new investments in health care that will cut costs for families and businesses; and number five, new savings in our Federal budget that will bring down the debt for future generations. That's the new foundation we must build. That's our house built upon a rock. That must be our future, and my administration's policies are designed to achieve that future.

Let me talk about each of these steps in turn. The first step we will take to build this foundation is to reform the outdated rules and regulations that allowed this crisis to happen in the first place. It is time to lay down tough new rules of the road for Wall Street to ensure that we never find ourselves here again. Just as after the Great Depression new rules were designed for banks to avoid the kind of reckless speculation that helped to create the Depression, so we've got to make adaptations to our current set

of rules: create rules that punish shortcuts and abuse; rules that tie someone's pay to their actual job performance—a novel concept—[*laughter*]; rules that protect typical American families when they buy a home, get a credit card, or invest in a 401(k). So we've already begun to work with Congress to shape this comprehensive new regulatory framework, and I expect a bill to arrive on my desk for my signature before the year is out.

The second pillar of this new foundation is an education system that finally prepares our workers for a 21st century economy. You know, in the 20th century, the GI bill helped send a generation to college. For decades, we led the world in educational attainment, and as a consequence, we led the world in economic growth. But in this new economy, we've come to trail the world's leaders in graduation rates, in educational achievement, in the production of scientists and engineers. That's why we have set a goal that will greatly enhance our ability to compete for the high-wage, high-tech jobs of the 21st century. By 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. That is the goal that we have set, and we intend to meet it.

Now, to meet that goal, we have to start early. So we've already dramatically expanded early childhood education. We are investing in innovative programs that have proven to help schools meet high standards and close achievement gaps. We're creating new rewards that tie teachers' performance and new pathways for advancement. And I've asked every American to commit to at least 1 year or more of higher education or career training, and we have provided tax credits to make a college education more affordable for every American, even those who attend Georgetown.

And, by the way, one of the changes that I would like to see—and I'm going to be talking about this in weeks to come—is once again seeing our best and our brightest commit themselves to making things—engineers, scientists, innovators. For so long, we have placed at the top of our pinnacle folks who can manipulate numbers and engage in complex financial calculations. And that's good, we need some of that. [*Laughter*] But you know what we can really use is some more scientists and some more engineers, who are building and making things that we can export to other countries.

Now, the third pillar of this new foundation is to harness the renewable energy that can create millions of new jobs and new industries. We all know that the country that harnesses this new energy source will lead the 21st century. Yet we've allowed other countries to outpace us on this race to the future. I don't know about you, but I do not accept a future where the jobs and industries of tomorrow take root beyond our borders. I think it's time for America to lead again.

So the investments we made in the Recovery Act will double this Nation's supply of renewable energy in the next 3 years. And we are putting Americans to work making our homes and buildings more efficient so that we can save billions on our energy bills and grow our economy at the same time.

Now, the only, though, that we can truly spark the transformation that's needed is through a gradual, market-based cap on carbon pollution, so that clean energy is the profitable kind of energy. There are those who've argued that we shouldn't attempt, we shouldn't even be thinking, we shouldn't even be talking about such a transition until the economy recovers. And they are right that we have to take into account the costs of transition. Transitioning to a clean energy economy will not be easy. But we can no longer delay putting a framework for a clean energy economy in place. That needs to be done now.

If businesses and entrepreneurs know today that we are closing this carbon pollution loophole, they'll start investing in clean energy now. And pretty soon, we'll see more companies constructing solar panels, and workers building wind turbines, and car companies manufacturing fuel-efficient cars. Investors will put some money into a new energy technology, and a small business will open to start selling it. That's how we can grow this economy, enhance our security, and protect our planet at the same time.

Now, the fourth pillar of our new foundation is a 21st century health care system where

families, businesses, and government budgets aren't dragged down by skyrocketing insurance premiums. One and a half million Americans could lose their homes this year just because of a medical crisis. Major American corporations are struggling to compete with their foreign counterparts. Small businesses are closing their doors. We can't allow the cost of health care to continue strangling our economy.

And that's why our Recovery Act will invest in electronic health records with strict privacy standards that can save money and lives and reduce medical error. That's why we've made the largest investment ever in preventive care, because that's one of the best ways to keep costs under control. And included in the budgets that just passed Congress is an historic commitment to reform that will finally make quality health care affordable for every American. So I'm looking forward in the next few months to working with both parties in Congress to make this reform a reality. We can get this done, and we have to get it done.

Now, fixing our health care system will require resources; it's not going to be free. But in my budget we've made a commitment to fully pay for reform without increasing the deficit, and we've identified specific savings that will make the health care system more efficient and reduce costs for us all. In fact, we've undertaken an unprecedented effort to find this kind of savings in every corner of the budget, because the final pillar in building our new foundation is restoring fiscal discipline once this economy recovers.

Already we've identified $2 trillion dollars in deficit reductions over the next decade. We need to do more, but we've already done that. We've announced procurement reform that will greatly reduce no-bid contracts and save the Government $40 billion. We need to do more, but that's an important start. Secretary Gates recently announced a courageous set of reforms that go right at the hundreds of billions of dollars in waste and cost overruns that have bloated our defense budget without making America safer. We need to do more, but that proposal by Secretary Gates is right on target. We will end education programs that don't work. We will root out waste and fraud and abuse in our Medicare program.

Altogether, this budget will reduce discretionary spending for domestic programs as a share of the economy by more than 10 percent over the next decade to the lowest level we've seen since we began keeping records nearly half a century ago. And as we continue to go through the Federal budget line by line, we will be announcing additional savings, secured by eliminating and consolidating programs that we don't need so that we can make room for the things that we do need.

That's what we're doing now. Of course, I realize that for some, this isn't enough. I know there's a criticism out there that my administration has been spending with reckless abandon, pushing a liberal social agenda while mortgaging our children's future. You've heard the argument.

Well, let me make three points. First, as I said earlier, the worst thing that we could do in a recession this severe is to try to cut Government spending at the same time as families and businesses around the world are cutting back on their spending. So as serious as our deficit and debt problems are—and they are very serious—major efforts to deal with them have to focus on the medium- and long-term budget picture, not on the short term. And that's exactly what we've done.

Second, in tackling the deficit issue, we simply cannot sacrifice the long-term investments that we so desperately need to generate long-term prosperity. That's the argument that some critics have made: "Well, you're proposing health care reform, you shouldn't be doing that; you're proposing education investments, you shouldn't be doing that. That adds to the deficit."

Look, just as a cash-strapped family may cut back on all kinds of luxuries, but will still insist on spending money to get their children through college, will refuse to have their kids drop out of college and go to work in some fast food place, even though that might bring in some income in the short term, because they're thinking about the long term, so we as a country have to make current choices with an eye to the future.

If we don't invest now in renewable energy, if we don't invest now in a skilled workforce, if we don't invest now in a more affordable health care system, this economy simply won't grow at the pace it needs to in 2 or 5 or 10 years down the road. If we don't lay this new foundation now, it won't be long before we're right back where we are today. And I can assure you that chronically slow growth will not help our long-term budget situation. That's the second point.

Third point, the problem with our deficit and debt is not new. It has been building dramatically over the past 8 years, largely because big tax cuts combined with increased spending on two wars and the increased costs of Government health care programs have pushed it ever upwards. This structural gap in our budget, between the amount of money that's coming in and the amount of money that's going out, will only get worse as the baby boomers age and will in fact lead us down an unsustainable path.

But let's not kid ourselves and suggest that we can solve this problem by trimming a few earmarks or cutting the budget for the National Endowment for the Arts. That's just not true. Along with defense and interest on the national debt, the biggest cost drivers in our budget are entitlement programs like Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security, all of which get more and more expensive every year. So if we want to get serious about fiscal discipline, and I do, then we're going to not only have to trim waste out of our discretionary budget—which we've already begun—we will also have to get serious about entitlement reform.

Now, nothing will be more important to this goal than passing health care reform that brings down costs across the system, including in Medicare and Medicaid. So make no mistake, health care reform is entitlement reform. That's not just my opinion; that was the conclusion of a wide range of participants at the Fiscal Responsibility Summit that we held at the White House in February. And that's one of the reasons why I firmly believe we need to get health care reform done this year.

Now, once we tackle rising health care costs, we must also work to put Social Security on firmer footing. It's time for both parties to come together and find a way to keep the promise of a sound retirement for future generations. And we should restore a sense of fairness and balance to our Tax Code, including by shutting down corporate loopholes and ensuring that everyone pays what they owe.

Now, all of these efforts will require tough choices. All these efforts will require compromise. But the difficulties can't serve as an excuse for inaction—not anymore—which brings me to one final point that I'd like to make today. I've talked a lot about the fundamental weaknesses in our economy that led us to this day of reckoning. But we also arrived here because of a fundamental weakness in our political system.

For too long, too many in Washington put off hard decisions for some other time on some other day. There's been a tendency to spend a lot of time scoring political points instead of rolling up sleeves to solve real problems. There's also an impatience that characterizes this town, an attention span that has only grown shorter with the 24-hour news cycle that insists on instant gratification in the form of immediate results or higher poll numbers. When a crisis hits, there's all too often a lurch from shock to trance, with everyone responding to the tempest of the moment until the furor has died down, the media coverage has moved on to something else, instead of confronting the major challenges that will shape our future in a sustained and focused way.

This can't be one of those times. The challenges are too great. The stakes are too high. I know how difficult it is for Members of Congress in both parties to grapple with some of the big decisions we face right now. I'd love if these problems were coming at us one at a time instead of five or six at a time. It's more than most Congresses and most Presidents have to deal with in a lifetime.

But we have been called to govern in extraordinary times. And that requires an extraordinary sense of responsibility: to ourselves, to the men and women who sent us

here, to the many generations whose lives will be affected for good or for ill because of what we do here.

There is no doubt that times are still tough. By no means are we out of the woods just yet. But from where we stand, for the very first time, we're beginning to see glimmers of hope. And beyond that, way off in the distance, we can see a vision of an America's future that is far different than our troubled economic past. It's an America teeming with new industry and commerce, humming with new energy and discoveries that light the world once more, a place where anyone from anywhere with a good idea or the will to work can live the dream they've heard so much about.

That is the house upon the rock: proud, sturdy, unwavering in the face of the greatest storms. And we will not finish it in 1 year. We will not finish it in many. But if we use this moment to lay that new foundation, if we come together and begin the hard work of rebuilding, if we persist and persevere against the disappointments and setbacks that will surely lie ahead, then I have no doubt that this house will stand and the dream of our Founders will live on in our time.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:43 a.m. in Gaston Hall at Georgetown University. In his remarks, he referred to John J. DeGioia, president, Georgetown University, and his son John Thomas.

Remarks on Tax Reform
April 15, 2009

Good morning. I decided not to bring Bo today because he stepped on my economic speech yesterday. [*Laughter*] Good morning. I know that April 15th is not exactly everyone's favorite date on the calendar, but it is an important opportunity for those of us in Washington to consider our responsibilities to the people who sent us here and who pay the bills. And I've brought some friends of mine who sent me here and pay the bills.

Across America, families like the people who join me have had tough choices forced upon them because of this economic downturn. Many have lost a job; many are fighting to keep their business open. Many more are struggling to make payments, to stay in their home, or to pursue a college education. And these Americans are the backbone of our economy, the backbone of our middle class. They're the workers, the innovators, the students who are going to be powering our recovery. So their dreams have to be our own. They need a government that is working to create jobs and opportunity for them, rather than simply giving more and more to those at the very top in the false hope that wealth automatically trickles down.

And that's why my administration has taken far-reaching action to give tax cuts to the Americans who need them, while jump-starting growth and job creation in the process. We start from the simple premise that we should reduce the tax burden on working people, while helping Americans go to college, own a home, raise a family, start a business, and save for retirement. Those goals are the foundation of the American Dream, and they are the focus of my tax policy.

First, we've passed a broad and sweeping tax cut for 95 percent of American workers. This tax cut was a core focus of my campaign, it was a core component of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and it is the most progressive tax cut in American history. And starting April 1st, Americans saw this tax cut in the extra money that they took home with each paycheck.

Make no mistake: This tax cut will reach 120 million families and put $120 billion directly into their pockets, and it includes the most American workers ever to get a tax cut. This is going to boost demand, and it will save or create over half a million jobs. And the Congressional Budget Office has found that tax cuts like these for American workers are more than three times more effective in stimulating recovery than tax breaks for the very wealthiest Americans.

This tax cut also keeps a fundamental promise: that Americans who work hard should be able to make a decent living. It lifts more than 2 million Americans out of poverty. And together with the child tax credit, it ensures that a working parent will be able to support their family.

Second, we are helping small businesses keep their doors open so they can weather this economic storm and create good jobs. Instead of the normal 2 years, small businesses are now allowed to offset their losses during this downturn against the income they've earned over the last 5 years. And this could provide a record number of refunds for small businesses, which will provide them with the lifeline they need to maintain inventory and pay their workers.

Third, we are helping Americans get the education they need to succeed in a global economy. For years we've seen the price of tuition skyrocket at the same time that it became more and more important to earn a college degree. And that's why we are making college more affordable for every American that needs a hand. That is why we are committed to simplifying the student loan process so more families can get the help they need. And that's also why our $2,500 tax credit for all 4 years of college will help us reach a goal that will help our country lead in the 21st century: By 2020, Americans once again will have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world.

Fourth, we are helping more Americans purchase homes that they can afford. Just as we must put an end to the irresponsible lending and borrowing that created the housing bubble, we must restore the home as a source of stability and an anchor of the American Dream. That's why we're providing a tax credit of up to $8,000 for first-time homebuyers, which will put a home within reach for hard-working Americans who are playing by the rules and making responsible choices. And by the way, there are at least a couple of folks here who have already used that $8,000 credit, and I think it's wonderful to see that this is already prompting some willingness for people to go ahead and make that first-time purchase where they thought maybe it was out of reach before.

Fifth, we know that tax relief must be joined with fiscal discipline. Americans are making hard choices in their budgets, and we've got to tighten our belts in Washington as well. And that's why we've already identified $2 trillion in deficit reductions over the next decade. And that's why we're cutting programs that don't work, contracts that aren't fair, and spending that we don't need.

We're also doing away with the unnecessary giveaways that have thrown our Tax Code out of balance. I said this during the campaign, I'm now saying it as President: We need to stop giving tax breaks to companies that stash profits or ship jobs overseas so we can invest in job creation here at home. And we need to end the tax breaks for the wealthiest 2 percent of Americans, so that people like me, who are extraordinarily lucky, are paying the same rates that the wealthiest 2 percent of Americans paid when Bill Clinton was President.

Finally, we need to simplify a monstrous Tax Code that is far too complicated for most Americans to understand, but just complicated enough for the insiders who know how to game the system. So I've already started by asking Paul Volcker and my Economic Recovery Board to do a thorough review of how to simplify our Tax Code, and to report back to me by the end of this year. It's going to take time to undo the damage of years of carve-outs and loopholes. But I want every American to know that we will rewrite the Tax Code so that it puts your interests over any special interests. And we'll make it easier, quicker, and less expensive for you to file a return, so that April 15th is not a date that is approached with dread every year.

Now, I just had a conversation with these wonderful Americans, and like people I talked to all across the country, they're not looking for a free ride. Every single person here is working hard and deserves a chance to get ahead. And they're family like—families like the Kirkwoods, who just want to own their own business and put away some money away for their kids' college tuition. And they're workers like Clark Harrison, behind me, who

has worked hard and wants to be able to purchase that first home. They're business owners like Alan Givens, who wants his company to sustain itself through bad times as well as the good. And I was encouraged to hear that Alan's business is going strong on a whole bunch of clean energy measures that he's helping to promote in his area.

For too long, we've seen taxes used as a wedge to scare people into supporting policies that actually increased the burden on working people instead of helping them live their dreams. That has to change, and that's the work that we've begun. We've passed tax cuts that will help our economy grow. We've made a clear promise that families that earn less than $250,000 a year will not see their taxes increase by a single dime. And we have kept to those promises that were made during the campaign. We've given tax relief to the Americans who need it and the workers who have earned it. And we're helping more Americans move towards their American Dream by going to school, owning a home, keeping their business, and raising their family.

So on this April 15th, we're reminded of the enormous responsibility that comes with handling peoples' tax dollars. And we're renewing our commitment to a simpler Tax Code that rewards work and the pursuit of the American Dream. And I just again want to personally thank all of the families and folks who join me here today, because they inspire me to do what I do every single day.

All right, thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:02 p.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Paul A. Volcker, Chairman, President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board.

Interview With Juan Carlos Lopez of CNN En Espanol
April 15, 2009

The President's Visit to Mexico/Mexico-U.S. Relations/Border Security

Mr. Lopez. You're going to Mexico. It's your first trip to Latin America, and the White House already announced that the Mexican cartels are being included in the Kingpin Act. What does this mean, and what message are you bringing to Mexico?

The President. Well, first of all, the reason we're going to Mexico is because it is our neighbor, it is one of our largest trading partners, and it's a country that has enormous ties to the United States. And so it was very important for me to send a message that we are going to continue to partner with Mexico to accomplish common goals of lifting up people's incomes and growing economic opportunity on both sides of the borders. And I think that President Calderon has done an outstanding and heroic job in dealing with what is a big problem right now along the borders with the drug cartels.

The Kingpin law allows us to go after the finances, the financial underpinnings of the cartels in a much more aggressive and much more effective way. And so that's just part of a broader strategy in which the United States and Mexico will be partnering. We are putting more resources on the border. We are providing additional surveillance equipment. We are going to be dealing not only with drug interdiction coming north, but also working on helping to curb the flow of cash and guns going south.

And so there's a true partnership that's developing. And I want to make sure that the people of Mexico understand that we are going to do everything we can on our end to promote more security and more peace and more prosperity in the region.

Latin America-U.S. Drug Control Cooperation

Mr. Lopez. One of the issues that is discussed in Mexico is that that Government spends between $7 billion and $8 billion in their war on drugs, while the U.S. destined $1.4 billion for the Merida Initiative that includes Central America and is spread out through several years. It's not seen as equitable.

The President. Well, first of all I think it's important to recognize that my budget has actually sought to increase by about 50 percent the amount of money that we're spending. We are already moving forward on, for example, Black Hawk helicopters to be sent to Mexico to help in the fight against the drug cartels.

So I want to put as much additional resources as we can into this effort. I think Mexico has been very serious about dealing with the problem. There are a number of Central American countries who are going to need our assistance as well. And my commitment is to make sure that the United States, working in a multilateral fashion with all the countries in the region, are finally putting an end to the power and the strength of these drug cartels.

Immigration Reform/DHS Assistant Secretary for International Affairs and Special Representative for Border Affairs (Border Czar)

Mr. Lopez. Will immigration reform be part of this whole process? And also, you've named a border czar. Was this consulted with Mexico, and what is he going to do?

The President. Well, the goal of the border czar is to help coordinate all the various agencies that fall under the Department of Homeland Security and—so that we are confident that the border patrols are working effectively with ICE, working effectively with our law enforcement agencies. So he's really a coordinator that can be directly responsible to Secretary Napolitano and, ultimately, directly accountable to me.

There has been a lot of interaction between Mexican officials and officials on our side of the border. And, you know, Janet Napolitano has already been there. She and John Brennan, who is part of my national security team, are currently there. We're going to continue to coordinate effectively.

Now, immigration reform has to be part of a broader strategy to deal with our border issues, and as I've said repeatedly, I am a strong proponent of comprehensive immigration reform. I've already met with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and committed to working with them to try to shape an agenda that can move through Congress. And this is something that I think is important not just because of the drug cartel issue; it's important because of the human costs of a ongoing flow of illegal immigrants into this country. It's something that we need to solve.

Cuba

Mr. Lopez. You're going to Trinidad and Tobago. Most of these countries, it's the first time you meet with the leaders. They've been—they want to bring Cuba up as an issue. You've lifted restrictions on Cuban Americans. How is this issue going to play out?

The President. Well, you know, I have no problem with them bringing up Cuba as an issue. I think I've been very clear about my position on Cuba. What I've said is, is that we should loosen up restrictions on travel and remittances. We have now acted on that. We also believe that Cuba can potentially be a critical part of regional growth in the region.

But Cuba has to take some steps, send some signals that when it comes to human rights, when it comes to political rights, when it comes to the ability of Cubans to travel, that there is some signs that we're moving away from what has been a set of policies that have really hampered Cuba's ability to grow.

I mean, I think—think about the irony, the fact that, you know, on the one hand we're loosening up travel restrictions, and yet there are a lot of Cubans who can't leave Cuba. That, I think, is an example of the kinds of changes that we hope we can promote over time. And I think that our partners in Central and South America can be very important in helping to move away from the past and into the future.

Latin American Systems of Government

Mr. Lopez. There's a movement in Latin America. Countries are resorting to democratic measures to change the constitution so that the current leaders can stay in office. It happened in Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, and it's also happening in Colombia. It's an internal matter, but how do you feel about those Presidents wanting to stay on, and will you bring it up at the summit?

The President. Well, you know, I think it's important for the United States not to tell other countries how to, you know, structure their democratic practices and what should be contained in their constitution. All I can say is that one of the strengths of the United States Government and our democracy, the reason it's been stable, is I think people have a sense that through constitutional means they can replace people who are in power who may not be meeting the interests of their populations.

If I'm not doing a good job, ultimately, in some way I'm accountable because of elections. But I'm also accountable in the sense that at most I've got 8 years and there's going to be some turnover. So that's been a strength of our system. And ultimately, it's up to the people of those countries to make a decision about how they want to structure their affairs.

Meeting Latin American Leaders/Latin America-U.S. Relations

Mr. Lopez. Now, more than the issues at the summit, a lot of people are focused on how you will interact with other leaders, for example, how you will face Hugo Chavez. Have you thought about that? Is it going to be any different than any other President?

The President. No, look, he's the leader of his country, and we'll—he'll be one of many people that I will have the opportunity to meet. And the whole message that we've tried to send throughout my campaign, throughout my recent travels overseas, at the G–20 for example, has been that the United States, I think, has a leadership role to play in dealing with many of the big problems that we face.

But we also recognize that other countries have important contributions and insights. We want to listen and learn, as well as talk. And that approach, I think, of mutual respect and finding common interests is one that ultimately will serve everybody.

Cuba

Mr. Lopez. Fidel Castro reacted to your lifting of sanctions, saying it was a positive move, but that he expected the lifting of the embargo. And he said that Cuba won't beg, but that's what eventually they expect from the U.S.

The President. Well, I don't expect Cuba to beg. Nobody is asking for anybody to beg. What we're looking for is some signal that there are going to be changes in how Cuba operates that assures that political prisoners are released, that people can speak their minds freely, that they can travel, that they can write and attend church, and do the things that people throughout the hemisphere can do and take for granted. And if there's some sense of movement on those fronts in Cuba, then I think that we can see a further thawing of relations and further changes.

But we took an important first step. I think it's a signal of our good faith that we want to move beyond the cold war mentality that has existed over the last 50 years. And hopefully, we'll see some signs that Cuba wants to reciprocate.

U.S. National Security/Spaniards in U.S. Custody

Mr. Lopez. Spanish judge Baltasar Garzon is considering a lawsuit filed by attorneys representing six Spaniards who were at one point held at Guantanamo. And that lawsuit wants to go after President Bush's legal team. What is your reaction to that?

The President. Well, you know, obviously, I've been very clear that Guantanamo is to be closed, that some of the practices of enhanced interrogation techniques, I think, ran counter to American values and American traditions. So I've put an end to these policies.

I'm a strong believer that it's important to look forward and not backwards and to remind ourselves that we do have very real security threats out there.

So I have not had direct conversations with the Spanish Government about these issues. My team has been in communications with them. I think that we are moving a process forward here in the United States to understand what happened, but also to focus on how we make sure that the manner in which we operate currently is consistent with our values and our traditions.

And so my sense is, is that this will be worked out over time.

Latin America-U.S. Relations/U.S. Foreign Policy in Latin America

Mr. Lopez. There is a sense of mistrust in the region towards the U.S. You inherited—you said you inherited the economic crisis. Did you inherit this from previous administrations? And how are you going to convince Latin Americans that the U.S. is sincere and that you really want to——

The President. Well, you know, I don't want to overstate the degree of anti-American sentiment. I mean, I think that these things go in ups and downs. But there are an awful lot of people in Latin America who are inspired by traditions of equal opportunity and entrepreneurship. And there's a reason why there are consistently so many immigrants to our country from Latin America. I think people still see America as a place full of hope.

But what is also true is there has always been a tradition of concern that the United States has been heavy-handed when it comes to foreign policy in Latin America. And that's not something that just arose during the Bush administration. That's something that dates back to the Monroe Doctrine and a long history of U.S. involvement in Latin America.

So the important thing—the important message I think I have to send is that we live in the 21st century now. Times have changed. A country like Brazil is a economic powerhouse and is a big player on the world stage. My relationship with President Lula is one of two leaders who both have big countries, that we're trying to solve problems and create opportunities for our people, and we should be partners. There's no senior partner or junior partner.

When I sit down with President Calderon—you know, he's a very capable person, and Mexico is very important to the United States just as the United States is important to Mexico. And so we have this interdependence.

And if we have an attitude of partnership, then—there are going to be times where countries disagree, but that's not just true between the United States and Latin American countries, between Latin American countries there are disagreements. That's the nature of foreign policy. But I think that we can put our foreign policy on a solid footing so that moving forward it's constructive, and ultimately, we're making lives better for ordinary people in all countries.

Mr. Lopez. Muchas gracias.

The President. De nada.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 1:54 p.m. in the Library at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico; Janet A. Napolitano, Secretary, and Alan Bersin, Assistant Secretary for International Affairs and Special Representative for Border Affairs, Department of Homeland Security; Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John O. Brennan; and President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil. Mr. Lopez referred to President Hugo Chavez Frias of Venezuela; former President Fidel Castro Ruz of Cuba; and Judge-Magistrate Baltasar Garzon Real of the National Court of Spain. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 16. Portions of this interview could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Remarks on Transportation Infrastructure
April 16, 2009

Thank you very much. That is a wonderful reception, and I want to, in addition to Ray LaHood and Joe Biden, Rahm Emanuel, all of who have worked on this extensively, I also want to acknowledge Jim Oberstar and Rob Andrews, two of our finest Members of Congress, both people who understand that investing in our infrastructure, investing in our

transportation system pays enormous dividends over the long term. So I'm grateful to them for being here.

Well, I've been speaking a lot lately about what we're doing to break free of our economic crisis so to put people back to work and move this nation from recession to recovery. And one area in which we can make investments with impact both immediate and lasting is in America's infrastructure. And that's why the Recovery and Reinvestment Plan we passed not 2 months ago included the most sweeping investment in our infrastructure since President Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System in the 1950s. And these efforts will save money by untangling gridlock, and saving lives by improving our roads, and save or create 150,000 jobs, mostly in the private sector, by the end of next year. Already, it's put Americans back to work. And so far, we're ahead of schedule, we're under budget, and adhering to the highest standards of transparency and accountability.

But if we want to move from recovery to prosperity, then we have to do a little bit more. We also have to build a new foundation for our future growth. Today, our aging system of highways and byways, air routes and rail lines is hindering that growth. Our highways are clogged with traffic, costing us $80 billion a year in lost productivity and wasted fuel. Our airports are choked with increased loads. Some of you flew down here and you know what that was about. We're at the mercy of fluctuating gas prices, all too often. We pump too many greenhouse gases into the air.

What we need, then, is a smart transportation system equal to the needs of the 21st century, a system that reduces travel times and increases mobility, a system that reduces congestion and boosts productivity, a system that reduces destructive emissions and creates jobs.

What we're talking about is a vision for high-speed rail in America. Imagine boarding a train in the center of a city, no racing to an airport and across a terminal, no delays, no sitting on the tarmac, no lost luggage, no taking off your shoes. [*Laughter*] Imagine whisking through towns at speeds over 100 miles an hour, walking only a few steps to public transportation, and ending up just blocks from your destination. Imagine what a great project that would be to rebuild America.

Now, all of you know this is not some fanciful, pie-in-the-sky vision of the future. It is now; it is happening right now. It's been happening for decades. The problem is it's been happening elsewhere, not here.

In France, high-speed rail has pulled regions from isolation, ignited growth, remade quiet towns into thriving tourist destinations. In Spain, a high-speed line between Madrid and Seville is so successful that more people travel between those cities by rail than by car and airplane combined. China, where service began just 2 years ago, may have more miles of high-speed rail service than any other country just 5 years from now. And Japan, the nation that unveiled the first high-speed rail system, is already at work building the next, a line that will connect Tokyo with Osaka at speeds of over 300 miles per hour. So it's being done; it's just not being done here.

There's no reason why we can't do this. This is America. There's no reason why the future of travel should lie somewhere else beyond our borders. Building a new system of high-speed rail in America will be faster, cheaper, and easier than building more freeways or adding to an already overburdened aviation system, and everybody stands to benefit.

And that's why today, with the help of Secretary LaHood and Vice President Biden, America's number one rail fan, I've been told—[*laughter*]—I'm announcing my administration's efforts to transform travel in America with an historic investment in high-speed rail. And our strategy has two parts: improving our existing rail lines to make current train service faster—so Rob can, you know, shave a few hours over the course of a week—but also identifying potential corridors for the creation of world-class high-speed rail. To make this happen, we've already dedicated $8 billion of Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds to this initiative, and I've requested another $5 billion over the next 5 years.

The Department of Transportation expects to begin awarding funds to ready projects before the end of this summer, well ahead of schedule. And like all funding decisions under

the Recovery Act, money will be distributed based on merit—not on politics, not as favors, not for any other consideration, purely on merit.

Now, this plan is realistic. And the first round of funding will focus on projects that can create jobs and benefits in the near term. We're not talking about starting from scratch, we're talking about using existing infrastructure to increase speeds on some routes from 70 miles an hour to over 100 miles per hour; so you're taking existing rail lines, you're upgrading them. And many corridors merit even faster service, but this is the first step that is quickly achievable, and it will create jobs improving tracks, crossings, signal systems.

The next step is investing in high-speed rail that unleashes the economic potential of all our regions by shrinking distances within our regions. There are at least 10 major corridors in the United States of 100 to 600 miles in length with the potential for successful high-speed rail systems. And these areas have explored its potential impact on their long-term growth and competitiveness, and they've already presented sound plans. I want to be clear: No decision about where to allocate funds has yet been made, and any region can step up, present a plan, and be considered.

The high-speed rail corridors we've identified so far would connect areas like the cities of the Pacific Northwest, southern and central Florida, the gulf coast to the Southeast to our Nation's Capital, the breadth of Pennsylvania and New York to the cities of New England, and something close to my heart, a central hub network that draws the cities of our industrial heartland closer to Chicago and one another.

Or California, where voters have already chosen to move forward with their own high-speed rail system, a system of new stations and 220-mile-per-hour trains that links big cities to inland towns, that alleviates crippling congestion on highways and at airports, and that makes travel from San Francisco to Los Angeles possible in 2½ hours.

And by making investments across the country, we'll lay a new foundation for our economic competitiveness and contribute to smart urban and rural growth. We'll create highly skilled construction and operating jobs that can't be outsourced and generate demand for technology that gives a new generation of innovators and entrepreneurs the opportunity to step up and lead the way in the 21st century. We'll move to cleaner energy and a cleaner environment. We'll reduce our need for foreign oil by millions of barrels a year and eliminate more than 6 billion pounds of carbon dioxide emissions annually, equal to removing 1 million cars from our roads.

Now, I know that this vision has its critics. There's those who say high-speed rail is a fantasy, but its success around the world says otherwise. I know Americans love their cars, and nobody's talking about replacing the automobile and our highways as critical parts of our transportation system. We are upgrading those in the recovery package as well. But this is something that can be done, has been done, and can provide us enormous benefits.

Now, there are those who argue that if an investment doesn't directly benefit the people of their district, then it shouldn't be made. Jim, you know some of those arguments. [*Laughter*] But if we followed that rationale, we'd have no infrastructure at all.

There are those who say, well, this investment is too small. But this is just a first step. We know that this is going to be a long-term project. But us getting started now, us moving the process forward and getting people to imagine what's possible and putting resources behind it, so that people can start seeing examples of this around the country, that's going to spur all kinds of activity.

Now finally, there are those who say at a time of crisis, we shouldn't be pursuing such a strategy; we've got too many other things to do. But our history teaches us a different lesson. As Secretary LaHood just mentioned, President Lincoln was committed to a nation connected from East to West, even at the same time he was trying to hold North and South together. He was in the middle of a Civil War. While fighting raged on one side of the continent, tens of thousands of Americans from all walks of life came together on the other. Dreamers and risktakers willing to invest in America, college-educated engineers

and supervisors who learned leadership in war, American workers and immigrants from all over the world, Confederates and Yankees joined on the same side.

And eventually, those two sets of tracks met. And with one final blow of a hammer, backed by years of hard work and decades of dreams, the way was laid for a nationwide economy. A telegraph operator sent out a simple message to a waiting nation. It just said, "DONE." [*Laughter*] A newspaper proclaimed: "We are the youngest of peoples, but we are teaching the world to march forward."

In retrospect, America's march forward seems inevitable. But time and again, it's only made possible by generations that are willing to work and sacrifice and invest in plans to make tomorrow better than today. That's the vision we can't afford to lose sight of. That's the challenge that's fallen to this generation. And with this strategy for America's transportation future and our efforts across all fronts to lay a new foundation for our lasting prosperity, that is the challenge we will meet.

"Make no little plans"—that's what Daniel Burnham said in Chicago. I believe that about America: Make no little plans. So let's get to work. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:33 a.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Transportation Raymond H. LaHood; and White House Chief of Staff Rahm I. Emanuel. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden.

Remarks at a Welcoming Ceremony in Mexico City, Mexico
April 16, 2009

Well, thank you very much. This is an extraordinary honor and an extraordinary pleasure to be here in Mexico with all of you today. I want to thank President Calderon and his wonderful First Lady and the delegation for their hospitality and facilitating this trip. And I want to thank the people of Mexico for the warmth with which I've been received, especially the young people who are here today. Thank you very much.

There is a reason why the first visit that I had with a foreign leader after my election was with President Calderon. It was a reminder, as John F. Kennedy said, that the bonds between our two countries cannot be broken. We are joined by a border, but our bonds are so much more than that. In my hometown of Chicago, the population is at least one-third made up of people of Mexican heritage. All across America, all across the United States, we have benefited from the culture, the language, the food, the insights, the literature, the energy, the ambitions of people who have migrated from our southern neighbor. And my hope is, is that the United States has had something to offer to Mexico as well. So our relationship, our friendship is strong, but as President Calderon said, we can make it stronger.

At a time where all of us are dealing with an extraordinary global recession, where unemployment is on the rise, where credit has begun to shrink, where businesses are struggling, it is more important than ever that we work together, not only to restore economic growth in Mexico and the United States, but also to make sure that growth is sustainable and to make sure that growth is from the bottom up, so that each and every person—every young person here in Mexico, as well as every young person in the United States, has an opportunity to live out their dreams.

At a time when the Mexican Government has so courageously taken on the drug cartels that have plagued both sides of the borders, it is absolutely critical that the United States joins as a full partner in dealing with this issue, both through initiatives like the Merida Initiative, but also on our side of the border, in dealing with the flow of guns and cash south.

And at a time when Mexico is not just a regional leader, but now a global leader, as shown by its outstanding participation in the G–20 summit and other multilateral organizations, it's

critical that we join together around issues that can't be solved by any one nation, issues like climate change, issues like poverty, issues like terrorism. These are issues in which the United States and Mexico will have to stand side by side in order to promote common security and common prosperity.

So it is wonderfully fitting to see the children of Mexico, as well as, I suspect, a few children of the United States here together, waving flags of both countries, because we are reminded—[*applause*]—because we are reminded that, ultimately, the reason that we serve in government, ultimately, the reason that bilateral relationships like this are so important, is because it allows us to promote a better future for our children.

That's what we're fighting for, for their dreams, for their opportunities, for their futures. And I'm very much looking forward to developing the kind of relationship between Mexico and the United States that will allow all the children here, and all the children in both countries, to thrive for years to come.

So thank you very much, Mr. President, Madam First Lady, and to all of you, for welcoming me in such a gracious way. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:30 p.m. at Los Pinos. In his remarks, he referred to President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico and his wife Margarita Esther Zavala Gomez del Campo.

The President's News Conference With President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico in Mexico City
April 16, 2009

President Calderon. Ladies and gentlemen of the press, of the media, I would like to give the warmest welcome to Mexico, to President Barack Obama, and to the delegation accompanying him. This is an historic event that will inaugurate a new era, a new relationship between our two countries.

Today in the meetings that we have held, we have confirmed the determination of both Governments to consolidate the very, very close contacts and links that join and bring together Mexico and the United States. We have new projects in important affairs, such as security, migration, competitiveness, and global affairs. As never before, we have decided that the fight against multinational organized crime must be based on cooperation, shared responsibility, and in trust, a mutual trust.

Both Governments recognize that the Merida Initiative is a very good starting point in order to strengthen cooperation in security. But we want to go beyond; we want to go further in order to liberate, to free our societies from the criminal activities that affect the lives of millions of people.

We have also agreed to expedite the times so that we can have available the resources for this Merida Initiative. And we have also decided to launch other activities that are in the hands of our Governments. For example, we can adopt new measures for preventing illicit flows at the border, particularly the flow of weapons and of cash. We will also be strengthening our cooperation in information and intelligence in order to more efficiently fight against money laundering.

On the other hand, we have also agreed that both Governments should produce a—propositions—proposals for our cooperation so that we can eventually have reform in the United States with full respect to the sovereign decisions of both Congresses—of both nations, that is. Our Governments will work in this sense to make migration an orderly, respectful process of human rights, a process in which human rights will be respected.

In energy and climate change, we have agreed to work together in order to guarantee a legal framework of certainty, transparency for the future, better use of cross-border resources such as gas and energy. And I have given to President Obama concrete proposals on climate change. One of them has to do with the integration of a bilateral market of carbon

emissions, which coincides a lot with proposals that he has made to the U.S. audience, and other cooperation—ways of cooperation in climate change, such as something that Mexico has proposed called the Green Fund.

We have also said that in addition to discussing our goals for carbon emissions that are linked in the fight against climate change globally, we must also act very soon in the design of new instruments, of new tools in order to fight against climate change. That is really the central proposal of the Green Fund.

And in a gesture of recognition, of acknowledgment on this topic, we know that President Obama and his Government have made considerable efforts to provide new arguments to the discussion of this topic. We would also like to thank—to welcome the possibility that Mexico might be the seat of the 16th U.N. conference on climate change that will be taking place in 2010.

We have recognized and acknowledged, ladies and gentlemen, that Mexico and the United States do not have to compete among themselves, but rather they must be able to take advantage of the complementary nature of their economies in order to compete as partners with regard to other parts of the world. We have the chance to make our region more competitive and to have greater, more agile production.

And we will be working in three areas. First, in the strengthening of the border infrastructure, I have also given to President Obama a proposal to facilitate the economic flows between both countries to improve the quality of life of the residents in the border areas and to foster the development of our two nations through very specific projects with—on infrastructure at the Mexican-U.S. border. Secondly, we believe it is essential to increase our cooperation and customs so that we can have a more efficient trade. And thirdly, we have also proposed to improve our cooperation in regulatory matters regarding tariffs or nontariffs issues that very often make difficult our trade between two countries.

We have agreed with President Obama that we seek agreements to truly improve the economic situation not only of the United States, but of the entire region and the world. We have stated our cooperation to strengthen the democracy of the market and of regional security.

In relation to President Obama's recent security to lift the restrictions for people from the U.S. to travel to Cuba and to be able to send remittances, Mexico acknowledges that this is a very constructive, positive step for the hemispheric relations, particularly for the region.

And finally, my friends, ladies and gentlemen, I want to tell you that I am absolutely convinced that President Obama's visit is just an initial step, the beginning of a relationship between two countries that are friends, neighbors, and must also be partners and allies.

Thank you so much. Thank you so much, President Obama, for your visit.

President Obama. I want to begin by thanking the people of Mexico for their gracious welcome. And I want to thank President Calderon for the hospitality he has shown us as host.

You know, this is my first trip to Mexico as President, and I see this visit, as I know President Calderon does, as an opportunity to launch a new era of cooperation and partnership between our two countries, an era built on an even firmer foundation of mutual responsibility and mutual respect and mutual interest. We had a productive and wide-ranging conversation, and I think we have taken some very important steps down that path.

It's difficult to overstate the depth of the ties between our two nations or the extraordinary importance of our relationship. It's obviously a simple fact of geography that we share a border, and we've always been bound together because of that geography. But it's not just that shared border that links us together. It's not only geography, but it's also culture, it's also the migration patterns that have taken place that have become so important.

Our deep economic ties mean that whenever—whatever steps that we're going to take moving forward have to be taken together. And that's why we worked hard, hand in hand, at the G–20 summit. And that's what we will continue to do at the Summit of the Americas and beyond so that we can jump-start job creation, promote free and fair trade, and develop a coordinated response to this economic crisis.

We also discussed our shared interest in meeting an immigration challenge that has serious implications for both the United States and for Mexico. My country has been greatly enriched by migration from Mexico. Mexican Americans form a critical and enduring link between our nations. And I am committed to fixing our broken immigration system in a way that upholds our traditions as a nation of laws, but also as a nation of immigrants. And I'm committed to working with President Calderon to promote the kind of bottom-up economic growth here in Mexico that will allow people to live out their dreams here and, as a consequence, will relieve some of the pressures that we've seen along the borders.

We also discussed what our nations can do to help bring a clean energy future to both countries. This is a priority for the United States. I know it's a priority for President Calderon. And I want to commend him for the work that he's already made in cutting greenhouse gas emissions, the commitment that he's made even though Mexico is not required to do so under the Kyoto Protocol. And together, we're establishing a new bilateral framework on clean energy and climate change that will focus on creating green jobs, promoting renewable energy, and enhancing energy efficiency. I look forward to strengthening our partnership in the upcoming Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate and in next year's U.N. climate negotiations, which I hope will be held here in Mexico.

Now, as essential as it is that we work together to overcome each of these common challenges, there's one particular area that requires our urgent and coordinated action, and that is the battle that's taking place with respect to the drug cartels that are fueling kidnapings and sowing chaos in our communities and robbing so many of a future, both here in Mexico and in the United States.

I have said this before; I will repeat it: I have the greatest admiration and courage for President Calderon and his entire cabinet, his rank-and-file police officers and soldiers as they take on these cartels. I commend Mexico for the successes that have already been achieved. But I will not pretend that this is Mexico's responsibility alone. A demand for these drugs in the United States is what is helping to keep these cartels in business. This war is being waged with guns purchased not here, but in the United States. More than 90 percent of the guns recovered in Mexico come from the United States, many from gun shops that line our shared border.

So we have responsibilities as well. We have to do our part. We have to crack down on drug use in our cities and towns. We have to stem the southbound flow of guns and cash. And we are absolutely committed to working in a partnership with Mexico to make sure that we are dealing with this scourge on both sides of the border.

And that's why we're ramping up the number of law enforcement personnel on our border. That's why, for the first time, we are inspecting trains leaving our country, not just those entering it. That's why our Department of Homeland Security is making up to $59 million available to defend our common border from this threat to both of our countries.

Now, as we discussed in our meeting, destroying and disrupting the cartels will require more than aggressive efforts from each of our nations. And that's why the United States is taking the following steps: We've begun to accelerate efforts to implement the Merida Initiative so we can provide Mexico with the military aircraft and inspection equipment they need when they need it.

Yesterday I designated three cartels as significant foreign narcotics drug traffickers under U.S. law, clearing the way for our Treasury Department, working together with Mexico, to freeze their assets and subject them to sanctions. My National Homeland Security Adviser, who is here, General Jim Jones, as well as my Homeland Security Secretary, Janet Napolitano, and my top adviser on homeland security and counterterrorism, John Brennan, are all meeting with their Mexican counterparts to develop new ways to cooperate and coordinate their efforts more effectively. In addition, as President Calderon and I discussed, I am urging the Senate in the United States to ratify an inter-American treaty known as CIFTA to curb small-arms

trafficking that is a source of so many of the weapons used in this drug war.

Now, there are some of the common challenges that President Calderon and I discussed in our meeting and that we're going to be working on to overcome in the months and years ahead. It will not be easy, but I am confident that if we continue to act as we have today, in a spirit of mutual responsibility and friendship, we will prevail on behalf of our common security and our common prosperity. So I think that this is building on previous meetings that we've had. In each interaction, the bond between our Governments is growing stronger. I am confident that we're going to make tremendous progress in the future. Thank you.

Assault Weapons Ban/Border Security

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Thank you, Mr. President, as well. President Obama, as a candidate for your office, you said that you wanted to see the assault ban weapon—the ban on assault weapons reinstated. Your Attorney General has spoken in favor of this. Mexican officials have also spoken in favor of it. But we haven't heard you say that since you took office. Do you plan to keep your promise? And if not, how do you explain that to the American people?

President Obama. Oh——

Q. And, President Calderon—I'm sorry—if I may, would you like to see this ban reinstated? And have you raised that today with President Obama? Thank you.

President Obama. Well, first of all, we did discuss this extensively in our meetings. I have not backed off at all from my belief that the gun—the assault weapons ban made sense. And I continue to believe that we can respect and honor the second amendment rights in our Constitution, the rights of sportsmen and hunters and homeowners who want to keep their families safe to lawfully bear arms, while dealing with assault weapons that, as we now know, here in Mexico, are helping to fuel extraordinary violence—violence in our own country as well.

Now, having said that, I think none of us are under any illusion that reinstating that ban would be easy. And so what we've focused on is how we can improve our enforcement of existing laws, because even under current law, trafficking illegal firearms, sending them across a border, is illegal. That's something that we can stop.

And so our focus is to work with Secretary Napolitano, Attorney General Holder, our entire Homeland Security team, ATF, border security, everybody who is involved in this, to coordinate with our counterparts in Mexico to significantly ramp up our enforcement of existing laws. And in fact, I've asked Eric Holder to do a complete review of how our enforcement operations are currently working and make sure that we're cutting down on the loopholes that are resulting in some of these drug trafficking problems.

Last point I would make is that there are going to be some opportunities where I think we can build some strong consensus. I'll give you one example, and that is the issue of gun tracing. The tracing of bullets and ballistics and gun information that have been used in major crimes, that's information that we are still not giving to law enforcement as a consequence of provisions that have been blocked in the United States Congress, and those are the areas where I think that we can make some significant progress early. That doesn't mean that we're steering away from the issue of the assault guns ban, but it does mean that we want to act with urgency, promptly, now. And I think we can make significant progress.

President Calderon. Thank you for your question. I want to say that, in effect, on this topic—not only on this topic, but on many of the other thorny topics of relations between U.S. and Mexico, we have had an open, frank, trusting conversation between President Obama and myself. We have spoken of assault weapons. He is well aware of our problems, and we have described it as it is.

From the moment that the prohibition of—on the sale of assault weapons a few years ago, we have seen an increase in the power of organized crime in Mexico. Only in my administration, in the 2 years and 4 months, we have been able to see—or rather we have seized more than 16,000 assault weapons. And in the efforts we have made to track their origin—and President Obama has referred to that—we have

seen that nearly 90 percent of those arms comes from the United States—those weapons come from the United States. There are about 10,000 sales points in the U.S.-Mexico border—only at the border.

On the other hand, I do believe that our relationship—the new era we must build in our relationship between Mexico and the United States must be one with trust and respect. And we definitely respect the decision of the U.S. Congress and of the U.S. people in this regard, because they are very well aware of President Obama and his Government's willingness to move forward on these issues.

We know that it is a politically delicate topic because Americans truly appreciate their constitutional rights, and particularly those that are part of the second amendment. I personally believe that as long as we are able to explain clearly what our problems in Mexico are, then we might also be able to seek a solution that—respecting the constitutional rights of the Americans, at the same time, will prevent—or rather avoid that organized crime becomes better armed in our country. But we have to work on it. We have to work on it. But we fully respect the opinion of the U.S. Congress, and we know that there's a great deal of sensitivity regarding this topic.

But there are many, many things that we can definitely move forward in. For example, in armament, it is not only a matter of seeing whether we can change the legislation on assault weapons—we have already said what our position is—but we might also be able to see whether they can apply existing legislation in Mexico and the United States on armament. For example, in Mexico it's a matter of enforcement with the Export Control Act. For example, the Export Control Act—this is in the United States; I'm sorry—prohibits the export of weapons to those countries where those weapons are prohibited. And that is the case of Mexico. If we actually comply with the U.S. law—or rather if everybody complies with the U.S. law that prohibits the sale of these weapons and their export to Mexico, we can move a great deal forward.

President Obama has made recent decisions in the last few weeks, and we value them and appreciate them, for example, to reinforce the operational capability of U.S. border agencies in order to comply with this legislation and with other laws, in order to review the flows of entry not only into the United States, but also the outgoing flows, outgoing from the U.S., to make sure that there is no illicit money, in strict compliance with United States legislation. I think these are very important steps.

But there is a problem, and only as long as we build on this trust and we clearly explain to citizens of both countries how we must find a solution, we will be able to achieve one. We do so respectfully, presenting our position, knowing full well how the U.S. people feel about this and being fully respectful of the sovereign decisions that the United States might make or that any other country might make.

One more thing I forgot to mention: One other thing we can do is to track the weapons that we have in Mexico. If we manage to detect weapons sold illegally in the United States in violation of this law on the control of weapons exports, or if, in the United States, they can have—probably move forward on a good registry of armament or on the prohibition of certain massive sales of weapons, for example, to a hunter or to a common citizen—we know that these people do not usually buy hundreds of rifles or assault weapons or of grenades—if we can move forward in those areas, I do believe that security both of Mexico—both of the United States and Mexico will improve, because those weapons are pointing against Mexican people and Mexican officials today.

But crime is not only acting in Mexico; it is also acting in the United States. Organized crime is acting in both countries. And I do hope that those weapons that are sold today in the United States and are being used in Mexico, I hope the day will never come in which they will also be used against the North American society or against U.S. officials, just like they are now being used in Mexico.

Mexico-U.S. Relations and Drug Control Cooperation

Q. Good afternoon, Presidents. You are going to share 4 years of an administration, and there can be an in-depth change in this fight

against organized crime in these 4 years. As of today, how can we establish the concrete objectives that in 2012 will allow us to say, fine, a new era began between Mexico and the United States back then?

Particularly I'm addressing this to you, President Obama. In addition to the chance that you will invest your political capital in being able to stop the flow of these weapons to Mexico, what can we hope for? How—what can we expect to see in terms of arresting the drug lords, the kingpins in the U.S.? Because there are laws against corruption, but this is enabling now; in other words, the U.S. market is now the biggest for drugs. And a former President of Mexico, ex-President Fox, said that in the back they have only gotten little pats in the back from his predecessors. Can we hope for more from your administration?

And to you, President Calderon, with this new era, how can you measure the detention, the arrest of drug lords in the United States and also putting a stop to the flow of weapons? How can you measure this?

President Obama. Well, I think that we can measure this in terms of the reduction in violence, in the interdiction of drugs, in the interdiction of weapons coming south, in the dismantling of the financial structures that facilitate these drug cartels, in the arrest of major drug kingpins.

So I think we know how to measure progress. The challenge is maintaining a sustained effort. And as I said, something that President Calderon and myself absolutely recognize is that you can't fight this war with just one hand. You can't just have Mexico making an effort but the United States not making an effort. And the same is true on the other side.

I think both our efforts have to be coordinated; both of our efforts have to be strengthened. I've made some very concrete commitments, already sending additional resources, already making additional investments. These are measurable in millions and, ultimately, billions of dollars over several years. And I believe that President Calderon has used enormous political capital to deal with this issue.

Obviously, the Mexican people, particularly along the borders, have suffered great hardship. And as a consequence, if we partner effectively—and that's why I brought many of my top officials on this trip to interact with their counterparts—I'm confident that we're going to make progress. Now, are we going to eliminate all drug flows? Are we going to eliminate all guns coming over the border? That's not a realistic objective. What is a realistic objective is to reduce it so significantly, so drastically, that it becomes once again a localized criminal problem as opposed to a major structural problem that threatens stability in communities along those borders and that increases corruption and threatens the rule of law. That's the kind of progress that I think can be made.

And so we're going to work as hard as we can and as diligently as we can on these issues, always mindful, though, that the relationship between Mexico and the United States cannot just be defined by drugs. Sometimes there's a tendency for the media to only report on drug interdiction or immigration when it comes to U.S.-Mexican relations. And one of the things that we talked about is the extraordinary opportunities for us to work together on our commercial ties, on strengthening border infrastructure to improve the flow of goods, on working on clean energy, which can produce jobs on both sides of the border.

So we're going to stay very focused on this. We're going to make this a top priority, but we just always want to remember that our relationship is not simply defined by these problems; it's also defined by opportunities. And that's what we want to take advantage of as well.

President Calderon. Thank you, President. I agree a great deal with you, and I fully thank you for your support and understanding in this very difficult topic. I think the question is very relevant. I see a big opportunity for President Obama and myself, since we are going to be sharing the next 4 years as heads of our administrations; I see a big opportunity here.

And on this issue, what I hope to see at the end of my administration is, actually, many things. One is a reduction in the levels of criminal activities in our countries related to organized crime, which is also related to drug trafficking; they go hand in hand. We have a

strategy with short-, mid-term, and long-term objectives.

In the short term, for example, we have set out to recuperate the security and tranquility of our citizens, particularly in those areas that have been harder hit by the crime. And this is where we have the joint operations where we are mobilizing not only our federal police but also the army; and this, regardless of the fact that it is not an easy matter and it hasn't been and it can change as—in the course of time, but at least we begin to see fruitful results in some areas.

For example, in the last quarter—or rather compared to the last quarter of last year, our first quarter of this year, there is already a drop of 27 percent in criminal activities. That is as an average for the entire country. Only in Ciudad Juarez—as of the joint operation that we launched in February—between February and March, violent deaths in Ciudad Juarez, crime-related—violence related to crime dropped by 80 percent.

Of course, I understand that the spectacular nature of some of these operations has really attracted worldwide attention. But with a very difficult crime rate that we had last year, despite them, crime in Mexico was 10.7 deaths because of crime for every 100,000 inhabitants. It is less than what it is in Guatemala, El Salvador, Colombia, Venezuela, or Brazil in Latin America, and it is also a lower number than the crime rates of many U.S. cities.

I believe one issue has to be, of course, that we have to cut down on crime in Mexico, for sure, but, number two, I hope, in the course of time, to be a safer border and a more efficient border. As long as—if we are able to stop the flow of drugs, illicit money, and weapons, we will have greater progress both in the United States and Mexico. And one way to measure this is by appreciating and valuing the technological capabilities, particularly of nonintrusive detection at the border, so that for those who do want to make business and do want to trade, that the border is open, and those who want to commit crime, the border will be a closed area. One way to measure this—and here U.S. cooperation is essential—is to have the right technology, particularly nonintrusive technology that will enable us to have safe borders. And the initiative—the Merida Initiative is very much focused on this.

Now, in the midterm, we would like a renewal of our police forces in Mexico. At the end of my administration, I would like to be able to have a new federal police that will be worthy of the citizens' trust and that will be efficient. And here U.S. cooperation is also fundamental. Why? Well, because on our side we are cleaning our house; we are sweeping everything from top to bottom so that all the police forces at the—from the top officials at the Attorney General's office, the army, the navy, that all officials in Mexico, all police officials, that we can truly trust in their honesty, and that at the same time, technologically, they will be top-notch as the rest of the world in investigation, in databases. We want a scientific police, one that is very well-trained in technology, and U.S. help will be very welcome and it will be essential.

We also have a judicial plan for oral trials. And I think that as we fulfill these objectives, many of them have already—are part of our agreement on safety, security, and protection. With a shared responsibility that we now have with President Obama and his team, we are certain that we will reach these objectives, and that our strategy, which is the correct one, will have many more possibilities of achieving success, and that at the end of our administration we will have a Mexico, a United States, that are much safer and freer of violence—violence free, rather.

Of course, drug trafficking cannot be ended by decree. As long as there is a supply, a high—or rather, is high demand, there will be a high supply. But what we can control is the effect of criminal activities in society to stop the actions of organized crime. And we can also act preventively in order to bring down the consumption of drugs in the United States and in Mexico too, which also begins to be a problem of great concern to us.

Cuba

Q. Mr. President, thank you. Mr. President.

President Obama, you said in an op-ed that was out today that your new Cuba policy was

part of an effort to move beyond the frozen disputes of the 20th century. Why then is it so limited? Why not open the door for all Americans to visit Cuba? And what will you say to your colleagues at the Summit of the Americas who want you to do more?

And, President Calderon, what do you think the United States should do more and—on Cuba in order to improve relations with the region? Thank you.

President Obama. Okay. Well, first of all, I don't think that we should dismiss the significance of the step that we took. We eliminated remittance restrictions and travel restrictions for Cuban Americans who have family members in Cuba. For those families, this is extraordinarily significant. For the people in Cuba who will benefit from their family members being able to provide them help and to visit them, it's extraordinarily significant. We took steps on telecommunications that can potentially open up greater lines of communication between Cuba and the United States.

And so I think what you saw was a good-faith effort, a show of good faith on the part of the United States that we want to recast our relationship. Now, a relationship that effectively has been frozen for 50 years is not going to thaw overnight. And so having taken the first step, I think it's very much in our interest to see whether Cuba is also ready to change. We don't expect them to change overnight. That would be unrealistic. But we do expect that Cuba will send signals that they're interested in liberalizing in such a way that not only do U.S.-Cuban relations improve, but so that the energy and creativity and initiative of the Cuban people can potentially be released.

I mean, we talk about the ban on U.S. travel to Cuba, but there's not much discussion of the ban on Cuban people traveling elsewhere and the severe restrictions that they're under. I make that point only to suggest that there are a range of steps that could be taken on the part of the Cuban Government that would start to show that they want to move beyond the patterns of the last 50 years.

I'm optimistic that progress can be made if there is a spirit that is looking forward rather than backward. My guidepost in U.S.-Cuba policy is going to be how can we encourage Cuba to be respectful of the rights of its people: political speech, political participation, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, freedom to—of travel. But, as I said before, I don't expect things to change overnight. What I do insist on is that U.S.-Cuban relationships are grounded with a respect not only for the traditions of each country but also respect for human rights and the people's—the needs of the people of Cuba.

And so I hope that the signal I've sent here is, is that we are not trying to be heavy-handed. We want to be open to engagement, but we're going to do so in a systematic way that keeps focus on the hardships and struggles that many Cubans are still going through.

President Calderon. I would not pretend to give advice or suggestions to President Obama on this matter or any other. Let me just say what I personally believe—or rather, what I believe about the Cuban reality. The question that has to be posed, rather, is whether the U.S. embargo on Cuba has worked. The reality is that the embargo has been there long before we were even born, and yet things have not changed all that much in Cuba. I think we would have to ask ourselves whether that isn't enough time to realize that it has been a strategy that has not been very useful to achieve change in Cuba.

I do think—I share fully the idea—we do not believe that the embargo or the isolation of Cuba is a good measure for things to change in Cuba. On the contrary, the reality that we see there is that the reality has not changed. And it's because of internal factors, mostly, of course, but also because of external reasons, such as the embargo. Because of that, the Cubans have become impoverished.

I greet—I welcome the measures that President Obama has taken in order to change this attitude and to try to attempt—and the attempt must be appreciated—to change the policy towards Cuba little by little. But what is clear to me is that we both share the same ideals. I think we would both like to see the world living at some point under a full democracy, a world with full respect for human rights, with no exceptions whatsoever. We would like to see a world working, with people being able to take

care of their families, to live in peace, and those principles that must protect humanity. That we do share.

We also share the idea that each nation must be respected in its own decisions. It's like we were saying a moment ago when we were talking about the prohibition of assault weapons. Of course, we do not want those weapons to be out in the streets, but at the same time, we want those decisions to come from the people themselves and to be self-determinant. And it's the same for Cuba. But I believe that the steps President Obama has taken are very positive.

Mexico is a good friend of Cuba, and Mexico is also a good friend of the United States. We want to be a good friend of Cuba and of the United States. We want both things. And we know that one day, the day that these principles we believe in prevail, that day we will be able to be neighbors, the three of us, the United States, Cuba, and Mexico.

What are the principles we believe in? Democracy, human rights, but also liberty, property, trade—free trade, free economy. And I think as long as those principles can function and bring benefits to the Cuban economy, then things can begin to change. We cannot change anything that has already taken place in the past, but I am certain that as heads of state, we can do a lot to try to make a different future, both for the world, both for our countries, and also in relation to Cuba.

I told President Obama—that the best of luck in this panorama that is now so totally different from what U.S. policy has been in the past. I hope for the best, and I hope that more expeditious steps could be taken so that we can move forward in this regard, and that everything will be done with good understanding. And as Mexico can contribute in any way for two of our friends to work out what they have between themselves, I hope that we can contribute. And if our best contribution is just to maintain our respect and our—that is fine.

Immigration Reform/Trade

Q. Good afternoon. For President Obama: Mr. President—[*inaudible*]—as U.S. Senator in 2006, voted in favor of the approval of the construction of the border wall. I would like to know, and I think Mexicans would like to know, what is your real commitment of your administration to present a new migratory—a comprehensive migratory reform? What would be its scope? And when would you approve this reform?

And on free trade, on NAFTA, it seems that because of the last events there's not a great deal of interest in the U.S. to apply or to comply with all the items in NAFTA. I would like to ask President Calderon whether you spoke of some of those issues during your conversations, whether you addressed the migratory issue and some of the NAFTA issues?

President Obama. Well, first of all, with respect to the immigration issue, I think you—it would be useful to point out that I also voted twice for comprehensive immigration reform that would have provided a pathway for legalization and an improvement of the orderly process of migration into the United States.

I've said before that we have to have a comprehensive approach, recognizing that the United States has a very legitimate concern. If you've got hundreds of thousands of people from other countries coming into the United States without anybody knowing who they are, who, when they arrive, can often be exploited and, because they're not protected by various laws, undermine the wages of U.S. workers, those are legitimate concerns on the part of the United States people and the United States Government. And so working effectively with the Mexican Government to create an orderly border is very important, and there are a whole host of strategies that we need to pursue.

What I've also said is that for those immigrants who are already in the United States—and by the way, we focus a lot on Mexicans who have come into the United States, but the number of immigrants from Central America, from Ireland, from Poland are substantial as well; it's not—this is not just an issue with respect to Mexico—with—for those immigrants who have put down roots, may have come there illegally, I think they need to pay a penalty for having broken the law. They need to come out of the shadows,

and then we have to put them through a process where, if they want to stay in the United States, they have an opportunity over time to earn that opportunity for a legal status in the United States.

Now, we came close to getting that kind of reform done several years ago, and then it became politicized. And my whole goal is to remove the politics of this and take a very practical, commonsense approach that benefits people on both sides of the border and creates a secure and safe border so you don't have people who are dying in the deserts as a consequence of a disorderly and illegal migration process. I think that's a goal that President Calderon and I share and one that we discussed during our bilateral meeting.

With respect of trade, Mexico is one of our largest trading partners. The amount of commerce that flows back and forth creates wealth in Mexico, and it creates wealth in the United States. I have said repeatedly that I'm in favor of free trade. I know that there has been some concern about a provision that was placed in our stimulus package related to Mexican trucking. That wasn't a provision that my administration introduced, and I said at the time that we need to fix this, because the last thing we want to do at a time when the global economy is contracting and trade is shrinking is to resort to protectionist measures.

My team is working with President Calderon's team to resolve this issue. I'm hopeful that we can resolve it in an effective way. It's not helpful to a number of U.S. producers who are interested in selling into Mexico and are fearful that they may be subject to countervailing tariffs or retaliation. So we're going to see if we can get this fixed. But I can tell you that President Calderon and I are entirely on the same page in believing that we can create greater opportunities for trade and strengthen our commercial relationships between our two countries.

I have said before in the past, and I will continue to say, that as part of the NAFTA framework, that it would make sense for labor and environmental provisions to be enforceable within that agreement, rather than just be viewed as a side agreement. But I recognize that we are in a very difficult time right now economically on both sides of the border, and that those kinds of negotiations are going to need to proceed in a very careful and deliberate way, because we don't want to discourage trade; we want to encourage trade right now. So I'm confident that our administrations are going to be able to work together, and it's going to be to the benefit both of Mexico and the United States.

President Calderon. We spoke at length on migration and on trade, and particularly on the economy in general between both nations. President Obama is well aware, is very knowledgeable about the problem, and his position in favor of a comprehensive migratory reform is well known. I would simply repeat the idea—or refrain the idea that we share the objective of achieving an orderly, legal, productive migration between both countries.

I have said, and I maintain, that as a Mexican, as President of Mexico, it doesn't make me particularly happy to see our people risk their lives going across a border, because I know that with every migrant that leaves, we have the best of our people leaving; the youngest, the most courageous, the strongest, the hardest working, they are the ones that are leaving. Because I have seen in many communities here in Mexico, and particularly the state I come from, Michoacan, where there are phantom towns now, where there are only the elderly, children, women, and no one else is left there.

So I am working hard to create in Mexico the conditions, the opportunities of work, of employment for our people here in Mexico. That is really the only way out that can put a stop to migration. I think that is the best way out, to create opportunities and employment in our country. But in the meantime, President Obama is very clear on what the problem consists of, and it's very important to establish those instruments that will enable people to come out of the shadows, as he himself has said, and to—that our region can gradually become more orderly, more legal, and better migration flows.

I think the two of us share the idea that trade produces benefits on both sides of the border. Not only are there many Mexican workers that depend on their exports to the United States today—by the way, in a very delicate situation that we're going through because of the

economic situation, the drop in the U.S. industry is very co-related to the drop in our Mexican industry—but there are also many workers in the United States that depend on the purchases that we make of U.S. products. Today, Mexican consumers are among the best buyers of U.S. products. Few consumers in the world buy as many U.S. products as we do here in Mexico.

So we must protect trade. And the best way of doing so is to allow it to flow naturally, with no restrictions. So beyond—going beyond the autonomous decisions that every country can take and the legitimate exercise of the rights that are part of the pacts and agreements that we have in order to protect free trade, I agree with President Obama, we have to go further. We have to go beyond in order to improve trade between both our countries. And we do not want to restrict it. We can come to agreements. We might have certain differences. I believe that we can move a great deal forward in labor and environmental issues, but it concerns me that to reopen those things that have been proven to work well can merely create further obstacles and worsen the situation we have today.

Our focus today on practical matters, and this is why—let me just mention three things that I believe we can work on. One is infrastructure at the border. I have talked to President Obama; I have shown him a list of 200 infrastructure projects of a larger or smaller scale that can generate employment both in the U.S. and Mexico at the border and improve our competitiveness at the border. So we have focused on six projects of border bridges, border crossing points that can lead to further employment and prosperity for our people.

The second item is customs cooperation that will enable us to have better cooperation, more expeditious cooperation, with no drop in productivity, to maybe have one single customs form—whether we're talking about exports or imports from one country to another—to have one single form that will allow us to reduce bureaucracy and make trade more expeditious.

And then also, third, concrete measures to have a harmonization of standards. Certain U.S. products, for example, need to have the units measured in pounds, and here we need them measured in kilos or in grams; we need to be able to have standards. If certain requirements differ from—in our two countries, I think we have to work towards a harmonization of these requirements. So these practical matters that seem to be minor are actually quite important. And I think they can truly help us.

And let me wrap up by saying that one of the things we emphasize is that both of us are going through economic problems because of this international crisis that we're undergoing. But if we act intelligently, we will understand that if we improve the North American competitiveness as a region that entails Canada, United States, and Mexico, if we improve the competitive conditions of our entire region, vis-a-vis other regions such as Asia or Eastern Europe or the rest of Latin America, then I do believe we will be able to come out of this problem much, much faster. Trade means opportunities; it equal opportunities of employment and of prosperity for our peoples always, always, and particularly today in these times of crisis and economic difficulties.

President Obama is undergoing tremendous efforts to improve things in the United States, and he is exercising in international leadership to face this economic situation. We firmly support on our side this situation, doing everything we can in order to revert this critical situation. And I do believe one way to do it is by strengthening trade not restricting it.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 4:29 p.m. at Los Pinos. In his remarks, the President referred to Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano; and Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr. President Calderon and some reporters spoke in Spanish, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Statement on the Release of Department of Justice Office of Legal Counsel Memos Concerning Interrogation Techniques

April 16, 2009

The Department of Justice will today release certain memos issued by the Office of Legal Counsel between 2002 and 2005 as part of an ongoing court case. These memos speak to techniques that were used in the interrogation of terrorism suspects during that period, and their release is required by the rule of law.

My judgment on the content of these memos is a matter of record. In one of my very first acts as President, I prohibited the use of these interrogation techniques by the United States because they undermine our moral authority and do not make us safer. Enlisting our values in the protection of our people makes us stronger and more secure. A democracy as resilient as ours must reject the false choice between our security and our ideals, and that is why these methods of interrogation are already a thing of the past.

But that is not what compelled the release of these legal documents today. While I believe strongly in transparency and accountability, I also believe that in a dangerous world, the United States must sometimes carry out intelligence operations and protect information that is classified for purposes of national security. I have already fought for that principle in court and will do so again in the future. However, after consulting with the Attorney General, the Director of National Intelligence, and others, I believe that exceptional circumstances surround these memos and require their release.

First, the interrogation techniques described in these memos have already been widely reported. Second, the previous administration publicly acknowledged portions of the program and some of the practices associated with these memos. Third, I have already ended the techniques described in the memos through an Executive order. Therefore, withholding these memos would only serve to deny facts that have been in the public domain for some time. This could contribute to an inaccurate accounting of the past and fuel erroneous and inflammatory assumptions about actions taken by the United States.

In releasing these memos, it is our intention to assure those who carried out their duties relying in good faith upon legal advice from the Department of Justice that they will not be subject to prosecution. The men and women of our intelligence community serve courageously on the frontlines of a dangerous world. Their accomplishments are unsung and their names unknown, but because of their sacrifices, every single American is safer. We must protect their identities as vigilantly as they protect our security, and we must provide them with the confidence that they can do their jobs.

Going forward, it is my strong belief that the United States has a solemn duty to vigorously maintain the classified nature of certain activities and information related to national security. This is an extraordinarily important responsibility of the Presidency, and it is one that I will carry out assertively, irrespective of any political concern. Consequently, the exceptional circumstances surrounding these memos should not be viewed as an erosion of the strong legal basis for maintaining the classified nature of secret activities. I will always do whatever is necessary to protect the national security of the United States.

This is a time for reflection, not retribution. I respect the strong views and emotions that these issues evoke. We have been through a dark and painful chapter in our history. But at a time of great challenges and disturbing disunity, nothing will be gained by spending our time and energy laying blame for the past. Our national greatness is embedded in America's ability to right its course in concert with our core values and to move forward with confidence. That is why we must resist the forces that divide us and, instead, come together on behalf of our common future.

The United States is a nation of laws. My administration will always act in accordance with those laws and with an unshakeable commitment to our ideals. That is why we have released these memos, and that is why we have

taken steps to ensure that the actions described within them never take place again.

NOTE: The statement referred to Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr.; and Director of National Intelligence Dennis C. Blair.

Remarks at a State Dinner Hosted by President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico in Mexico City
April 16, 2009

Good evening. Thank you very much. Let me begin by expressing my deepest thanks to President Calderon and Mrs. Zavala for their gracious welcome, and thank you for the spectacular setting. I can't imagine a more magnificent evening. This is my first trip as President to Mexico, and it's one that I will always remember fondly for the hospitality and the warmth that has been provided to me during my brief visit.

Now, earlier today we conducted a series of productive meetings on a whole host of challenges and opportunities that we face jointly. We spoke about our deep economic ties, reflecting the $1 billion of trade that crosses our borders every day. And we discussed steps that we can take together, both bilaterally and in a global setting, to advance opportunity and prosperity in our two countries and across the Americas.

We spoke about the deep ties between our peoples, and what steps can be made to meet our immigration challenge. That involves passing comprehensive immigration reform in the United States, which I am committed to doing, and it involves making certain that we are promoting increased opportunity here in Mexico.

We spoke about our obligation to take steps to build clean energy together that can power our economies and beat back climate change in future centuries. And of course, we spoke about the grave dangers that the drug cartels are presenting to both our nations, that are threatening innocent men and women and children on both sides of our borders, and our shared determination to put an end to these drug wars.

These are some of the critical challenges that we face as a result of a border we share. But what makes us good neighbors is not that our interests are always aligned, that we will agree on everything. In our long and interwoven history, we haven't always been on the same side of every issue, and there is no doubt that in the future there will be differences once again. What makes us good neighbors is a simple truth that our people share so much more than common challenges and common interests. We also share values and ideals. We are both a people who know the meaning of hard work, a people who know what it means to struggle and to sacrifice on behalf of our children and our grandchildren, people who know that strength comes from faith and from family, people who have known hardship and trial and persevered in the face of great odds.

That's the story of the separate struggles for independence that have made our nations who we are, struggles that are forged on this continent, two adjoining nations founded on a set of shared values that our democracy is not simply a gift from a previous generation, but a responsibility for each generation to protect and to pass on to the next. We both understand that no one, whether through influence of politics, the power of money, or the fear of force, is above the law, and that we are—every one of us—equal, endowed with the basic human rights that spring not from our laws but from our Maker.

Each of our nations was formed out of this sense that a state has no greater responsibility than to uphold the essential dignity of its citizens. That was the promise of my country's struggle for independence. That was the promise of Mexico's struggle for independence. That was the promise of American independence. It's a promise advanced by Hidalgo as well as Washington, by Lincoln but also by Juarez, and a promise that now falls on all of us to advance in our own time.

More than 60 years ago, at a moment when our world was consumed with war, one of my predecessors came here to Mexico to reaffirm the relationship between our two nations. In a speech to the people of Mexico, Franklin Delano Roosevelt said: "[Our] peoples are finding that they have common aspirations. They can work together for a common objective. Let us never lose hold of that truth."

That was President Roosevelt's message then; that is my message now. And I'm confident that if we continue to draw strength from our common aspirations and purpose from our common objectives, if we continue to act, as we have during this visit, in a spirit of mutual responsibility, mutual respect, and mutual interest, then that is a truth that we will uphold together in the months and years to come.

And I am so pleased that I have such an outstanding partner as President Calderon, somebody who has shown his courage and his bravery, and somebody who's shown that he combines a sense of principle with a sense of practicality; somebody who I know wants to be a partner with me as we strengthen our partnership and we make certain that the children of Mexico and the children of the United States are both seeing a future that's more prosperous and more hopeful than the ones that have come before.

So thank you very much, everybody. And let me please make a toast to my host.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:17 p.m. at the Museo Nacional de Antropologia. In his remarks, he referred to Margarita Esther Zavala Gomez del Campo, wife of President Calderon.

Remarks to the Summit of the Americas in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago
April 17, 2009

Good evening. I am honored to join you here today, and I want to thank Prime Minister Manning, the people of Trinidad and Tobago for their generosity in hosting the fifth Summit of the Americas. And I want to extend my greetings to all the heads of state, many of who I am meeting for the first time. All of us are extraordinarily excited to have this opportunity to visit this wonderful country, and as somebody who grew up on an island, I can tell you I feel right at home.

It's appropriate and important that we hold this summit in the Caribbean. The energy, the dynamism, the diversity of the Caribbean people inspires us all and are such an important part of what we share in common as a hemisphere.

I think everybody recognizes that we come together at a critical moment for the people of the Americas. Our well-being has been set back by a historic economic crisis. Our safety is endangered by a broad range of threats. But this peril can be eclipsed by the promise of a new prosperity and personal security and the protection of liberty and justice for all the people of our hemisphere. That's the future that we can build together, but only if we move forward with a new sense of partnership.

All of us must now renew the common stake that we have in one another. I know the promises of partnership have gone unfulfilled in the past and that trust has to be earned over time. While the United States has done much to promote peace and prosperity in the hemisphere, we have at times been disengaged, and at times we sought to dictate our terms. But I pledge to you that we seek an equal partnership. There's no—[*applause*]—there is no senior partner and junior partner in our relations; there is simply engagement based on mutual respect and common interests and shared values. So I'm here to launch a new chapter of engagement that will be sustained throughout my administration.

Now, to move forward, we cannot let ourselves be prisoners of past disagreements. I am very grateful that President Ortega—[*applause*]—I'm grateful that President Ortega did not blame me for things that happened when I was 3 months old. [*Laughter*] Too often, an opportunity to build a fresh partnership of the Americas has been undermined by stale debates. And we've heard all these arguments before, these debates that would have us make a

false choice between rigid, state-run economies or unbridled and unregulated capitalism, between blame for right-wing paramilitaries or left-wing insurgents, between sticking to inflexible policies with regard to Cuba or denying the full human rights that are owed to the Cuban people.

I didn't come here to debate the past; I came here to deal with the future. I believe, as some of our previous speakers have stated, that we must learn from history, but we can't be trapped by it. As neighbors, we have a responsibility to each other and to our citizens. And by working together, we can take important steps forward to advance prosperity and security and liberty. That is the 21st century agenda that we come together to enact. That's the new direction that we can pursue.

Before we move forward for our shared discussions over this weekend, I'd like to put forward several areas where the United States is committed already to strengthening collective action on behalf of our shared goals.

First, we must come together on behalf of our common prosperity. That's what we've already begun to do. Our unprecedented actions to stimulate growth and restart the flow of credit will help create jobs and prosperity within our borders and within yours. We joined with our G–20 partners to set aside over a trillion dollars for countries going through difficult times, recognizing that we have to provide assistance to those countries that are most vulnerable. We will work with you to ensure that the Inter-American Development Bank can take the necessary steps to increase its current levels of lending and to carefully study the needs for recapitalization in the future. And we recognize that we have a special responsibility, as one of the world's financial centers, to work with partners around the globe to reform a failed regulatory system, so that we can prevent the kinds of financial abuses that led to this current crisis from ever happening again and achieve an economic expansion—not just in the United States but all across the hemisphere—that is built not on bubbles, but on sustainable economic growth.

We're also committed to combating inequality and creating prosperity from the bottom up. This is something that I've spoken about in the United States, and it's something that I believe applies across the region. I've asked Congress for $448 million in immediate assistance for those who have been hit hardest by the crisis beyond our borders. And today I'm pleased to announce a new Microfinance Growth Fund for the hemisphere that can restart the lending that can power businesses and entrepreneurs in each and every country that's represented here. This is not charity. Let me be clear: This is not charity. Together, we can create a broader foundation of prosperity that builds new markets and powers new growth for all peoples in the hemisphere, because our economies are intertwined.

Next, we can strengthen the foundation of our prosperity and our security and our environment through a new partnership on energy. Our hemisphere is blessed with bountiful resources, and we are all endangered by climate change. Now we must come together to find new ways to produce and use energy so that we can create jobs and protect our planet.

So today I'm proposing the creation of a new energy and climate partnership of the Americas that can forge progress to a more secure and sustainable future. It's a partnership that will harness the vision and determination of countries like Mexico and Brazil that have already done outstanding work in this area to promote renewable energy and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Now, each country will bring its own unique resources and needs, so we will ensure that each country can maximize its strengths as we promote efficiency and improve our infrastructure, share technologies, support investments in renewable sources of energy. And in doing so, we can create the jobs of the future, lower greenhouse gas emissions, and make this hemisphere a model for cooperation.

The dangers of climate change are part of a broad range of threats to our citizens; so the third area where we must work together is to advance our common security. Today, too many people in the Americas live in fear. We must not tolerate violence and insecurity, no matter where it comes from. Children must be safe to play in the street, and families should

never face the pain of a kidnaping. Policemen must be more powerful than kingpins, and judges must advance the rule of law. Illegal guns must not flow freely into criminal hands, and illegal drugs must not destroy lives and distort our economy.

Yesterday President Calderon of Mexico and I renewed our commitment to combat the dangers posed by drug cartels. Today I want to announce a new initiative to invest $30 million to strengthen cooperation on security in the Caribbean. And I have directed key members of my Cabinet to build and sustain relations with their counterparts in the hemisphere to constantly adjust our tactics, to build upon best practices, and develop new modes of cooperation, because the United States is a friend of every nation and person who seeks a future of security and dignity.

And let me add that I recognize that the problem will not simply be solved by law enforcement if we're not also dealing with our responsibilities in the United States. And that's why we will take aggressive action to reduce our demand for drugs and to stop the flow of guns and bulk cash south across our borders. And that's why I'm making it a priority to ratify the Illicit Trafficking in Firearms Convention as another tool that we can use to prevent this from happening. And I also am mindful of the statement that's been made earlier, that unless we provide opportunity for an education and for jobs and a career for the young people in the region, then too many will end up being attracted to the drug trade. And so we cannot separate out dealing with the drug issue on the interdiction side and the law enforcement side from the need for critical development in our communities.

Finally, we know that true security only comes with liberty and justice. Those are bedrock values of the Inter-American Charter. Generations of our people have worked and fought and sacrificed for them. And it is our responsibility to advance them in our time. So together, we have to stand up against any force that separates any of our people from that story of liberty, whether it's crushing poverty or corrosive corruption, social exclusion or persistent racism or discrimination. Here in this room, and on this dais, we see the diversity of the Americas. Every one of our nations has a right to follow its own path. But we all have a responsibility to see that the people of the Americans have the ability to pursue their own dreams in democratic societies.

There's been several remarks directed at the issue of the relationship between the United States and Cuba, so let me address this. The United States seeks a new beginning with Cuba. I know that there is a longer—[*applause*]—I know there's a longer journey that must be traveled to overcome decades of mistrust, but there are critical steps we can take toward a new day. I've already changed a Cuba policy that I believe has failed to advance liberty or opportunity for the Cuban people. We will now allow Cuban Americans to visit the islands whenever they choose and provide resources to their families the same way that so many people in my country send money back to their families in your countries to pay for everyday needs.

Over the past 2 years, I've indicated, and I repeat today, that I'm prepared to have my administration engage with the Cuban Government on a wide range of issues, from drugs, migration, and economic issues, to human rights, free speech, and democratic reform. Now, let me be clear: I'm not interested in talking just for the sake of talking. But I do believe that we can move U.S.-Cuban relations in a new direction.

As has already been noted, and I think my presence here indicates, the United States has changed over time. It has not always been easy, but it has changed. And so I think it's important to remind my fellow leaders that it's not just the United States that has to change. All of us have responsibilities to look towards the future.

I think it's important to recognize, given historic suspicions, that the United States policy should not be interference in other countries, but that also means that we can't blame the United States for every problem that arises in the hemisphere. That's part of the bargain. That's part of the change that has to take place. That's the old way, and we need a new way.

The United States will be willing to acknowledge past errors where those errors have been made. We will be partners in helping

to alleviate poverty. But the American people have to get some positive reinforcement if they are to be engaged in the efforts to lift other countries out of the poverty that they're experiencing.

Every nation has been on its own journey. Here in Trinidad and Tobago, we must respect those differences while celebrating those things that we share in common. Our nations were all colonized by empires and achieved our own liberation. Our people reflect the extraordinary diversity of human beings, and our shared values reflect a common humanity: the universal desire to leave our children a world that is more prosperous and peaceful than the one that we inherited.

So as we gather here, let us remember that our success must be measured by the ability of people to live their dreams. That's a goal that cannot be encompassed with any one policy or communique. It's not a matter of abstractions or ideological debates. It's a question of whether or not we are in a concrete way making the lives of our citizens better. It's reflected in the hopes of our children, in the strength of our democratic institutions, and our faith in the future.

It will take time. Nothing is going to happen overnight. But I pledge to you that the United States will be there as a friend and a partner, because our futures are inextricably bound to the future of the people of the entire hemisphere. And we are committed to shaping that future through engagement that is strong and sustained, that is meaningful, that is successful, and that is based on mutual respect and equality.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:30 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Trinidad. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Patrick Manning of Trinidad and Tobago; and President Daniel Ortega Saavedra of Nicaragua.

The President's Weekly Address
April 18, 2009

It's not news to say that we are living through challenging times: the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, a credit crisis that's made that downturn worse, and a fiscal disaster that has accumulated over a period of years.

In the year 2000, we had projected budget surpluses in the trillions, and Washington appeared to be on the road to fiscal stability. Eight years later, when I walked in the door, the projected budget deficit for this year alone was 1.3 trillion. And in order to jump-start our struggling economy, we were forced to make investments that added to that deficit through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

But as surely as our future depends on building a new energy economy, controlling health care costs, and ensuring that our kids are once again the best educated in the world, it also depends on restoring a sense of responsibility and accountability to our Federal budget. Without significant change to steer away from ever-expanding deficits and debt, we are on an unsustainable course.

So today, we simply cannot afford to perpetuate a system in Washington where politicians and bureaucrats make decisions behind closed doors with little accountability for the consequences, where billions are squandered on programs that have outlived their usefulness or exist solely because of the power of a lobbyist or interest group, and where outdated technology and information systems undermine efficiency, threaten our security, and fail to serve an engaged citizenry.

If we're going to rebuild our economy on a solid foundation, we need to change the way we do business in Washington. We need to restore the American people's confidence in their Government; that it is on their side, spending their money wisely to meet their families' needs.

That starts with the painstaking work of examining every program, every entitlement, every dollar of Government spending and asking ourselves: Is this program really essential? Are

taxpayers getting their money's worth? Can we accomplish our goals more efficiently or effectively some other way?

It's a process we have already begun, scouring our budget line by line for programs that don't work so we can cut them to make room for ones that do. That means ending tax breaks for companies shipping jobs overseas, stopping the fraud and abuse in our Medicare program, and reforming our health care system to cut costs for families and businesses. It means strengthening whistleblower protections for Government employees who step forward to report wasteful spending, and it means reinstating the pay-as-you-go rule that we followed during the 1990s, so if we want to spend, we'll need to find somewhere else to cut.

And this Monday, in my first full Cabinet meeting, I will ask all of my department and agency heads for specific proposals for cutting their budgets. Already, members of my Cabinet have begun to trim back unnecessary expenditures. Secretary Napolitano, for example, is ending consulting contracts to create new seals and logos that have cost the Department of Homeland Security $3 million since 2003. In the largest Department, Secretary Gates has launched a historic project to reform defense contracting procedures and eliminate hundreds of billions of dollars in wasteful spending and cost overruns. And I commend Senators McCain and Levin, a Republican and a Democrat, who have teamed up to lead this effort in Congress.

Finally, in the coming weeks, I will be announcing the elimination of dozens of Government programs shown to be wasteful or ineffective. In this effort, there will be no sacred cows and no pet projects. All across America, families are making hard choices, and it's time their Government did the same.

That is why I have assembled a team of management, technology, and budget experts to guide us in this work, leaders who will help us revamp Government operations from top to bottom and ensure that the Federal Government is truly working for the American people.

I have named Jeffrey Zients, a leading CEO, management consultant, and entrepreneur, to serve as Deputy Director for Management of the Office of Management and Budget and as the first ever Chief Performance Officer. Jeffrey will work to streamline processes, cut costs, and find best practices throughout our Government.

Aneesh Chopra, who is currently the secretary of technology for Governor Kaine of Virginia, has agreed to serve as America's Chief Technology Officer. In this role, Aneesh will promote technological innovation to help achieve our most urgent priorities, from creating jobs and reducing health care costs to keeping our Nation secure.

Aneesh and Jeffrey will work closely with our Chief Information Officer, Vivek Kundra, who is responsible for setting technology policy across the Government and using technology to improve security, ensure transparency, and lower costs. The goal is to give all Americans a voice in their Government and ensure that they know exactly how we're spending their money and can hold us accountable for the results.

None of this will be easy; big change never is. But with the leadership of these individuals, I am confident that we can break our bad habits, put an end to the mismanagement that has plagued our Government, and start living within our means again. That's how we will get our deficits under control and move from recovery to prosperity. And that is how we will give the American people the kind of Government they expect and deserve, one that is efficient, accountable, and fully worthy of their trust.

Thank you.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:15 p.m. on April 15 in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House for broadcast on April 18. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 17 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on April 18. In the address, the President referred to Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Leaders of the Union of South American Nations in Port of Spain
April 18, 2009

Good morning, everybody. I just want to say very quickly, I'm very grateful for the opportunity to meet with my colleagues from the south and participate in the meeting. UNASUR is doing some excellent work in their efforts in the region on things like energy and security. I have a lot to learn, and I very much look forward to listening and figuring out how we can work together more effectively. So hopefully, the meeting itself will go more smoothly than getting you guys in to take pictures. [*Laughter*]

All right? Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:25 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Trinidad. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Leaders of the Central American Integration System in Port of Spain
April 19, 2009

Well, good morning, everybody. I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to meet with the leaders of Central America. Obviously, we have a long history of relations between the United States and Central America, that is a critical partner on a whole range of issues. We have the leadership here—democratically elected—and provided a lot of important information during the course of this summit.

But obviously, when you're in a group of 36, it's more difficult to focus just on the regional issues. So this gives me an opportunity to hear more directly about both challenges and opportunities in the region. So I'm very grateful that they've taken the time to meet with me, and I'm looking forward to hearing more about how the United States can be an effective partner with all the countries represented.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:18 a.m. at the Hyatt Regency Trinidad. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

The President's News Conference in Port of Spain
April 19, 2009

The President. Hey, guys. You guys have a seat. Thanks. This is nice. This is a nice view, huh? Oh, it's beautiful. Did you guys go out last night, by the way? [*Laughter*] Chuck Todd [NBC News], did I see you on the cruise ship? [*Laughter*]

Q. That wasn't me.

The President. All right. Well, we just concluded a very productive summit. And I want to thank the people of Trinidad and Tobago for their wonderful hospitality and their gracious welcome. I want to thank Prime Minister Manning and First Lady Manning, his Government, for the hospitality they've shown me and our entire delegation.

This summit's been held at a time of great challenge and great opportunity for the United States and the Americas. The consequences of a historic economic crisis are being felt across the hemisphere, putting new pressure on peoples and governments that are already strained. Migration to and from each of our nations has serious implications for all nations. The safety and security of our citizens is endangered by drug trafficking, lawlessness, and a host of other threats. Our energy challenge offers us a chance to unleash our

joint economic potential, enhance our security, and protect our planet. And too many citizens are being denied dignity and opportunity and a chance to live out their dreams in Cuba and all across the hemisphere.

These are some of the issues I discussed here in Trinidad and Tobago with leaders like President Garcia of Peru, President Bachelet of Chile, President Uribe of Colombia, President Preval of Haiti, and Prime Minister Harper of Canada. The subject of many of these meetings and conversations has been launching a new era of partnership between our nations. Over the past few days, we've seen potential positive signs in the nature of the relationship between the United States, Cuba, and Venezuela. But as I've said before, the test for all of us is not simply words, but also deeds. I do believe that the signals sent so far provide at least an opportunity for frank dialog on a range of issues, including critical areas of democracy and human rights throughout the hemisphere.

Now, I do not see eye to eye with every regional leader on every regional issue, and I do not agree with everything that was said at this summit by leaders from other nations. But what we showed here is that we can make progress when we're willing to break free from some of the stale debates and old ideologies that have dominated and distorted the debate in this hemisphere for far too long. We showed that while we have our differences, we can, and must, work together in areas where we have mutual interests, and where we disagree we can disagree respectfully. We showed that there are no senior or junior partners in the Americas; that we're simply partners committed to advancing a common agenda and overcoming common challenges.

And that spirit of shared responsibility was reflected in the achievement of the summit and in the work that the United States has done in concert with nations across Americas. First, we're building on our unprecedented efforts in the United States and on the work that we did at the G–20 summit in London to jump-start job creation, reform a broken financial regulatory system, and put our economies on the path of sustainable growth and shared prosperity. We're tripling the International Monetary Fund's lending capacity. We're urging the Inter-American Development Bank to increase its current lending level, and the United States is launching a new Microfinance Growth Fund for the hemisphere that will make meaningful differences for businesses and entrepreneurs across America.

Over the past few days, we also discussed what we can do to ensure that the policies we pursue in our own countries advance and do not undercut our broader regional recovery. Together, these efforts will help drive economic expansion in the United States and across the hemisphere and ensure that we do not see an erosion of the progress that we've made to lift people out of poverty and into the middle class.

Second, we're acting boldly, we are acting swiftly, and we are acting in concert to combat threats that are endangering the safety and security of citizens across the Americas. This week I traveled to Mexico, where I met with President Calderon to advance our shared commitment to combating the drug cartels, stemming the southbound flow of guns and money, and protecting citizens on both sides of our common border.

We are also taking a number of other key steps in concert with our regional partners, so when I met with the Central American nations and the Caribbean nations, they had similar concerns, and we pledged to work together to defend our nations and keep our people safe. The United States is investing $30 million in enhanced security partnerships with Caribbean nations to ensure that they have the resources they need to combat drug traffickers seeking to enter their borders from Mexico and Central America. And I'm also making it a priority to ratify the Illicit Trafficking in Firearms Convention and to enhance cooperation with nations across the region to reduce the threat of existing weapons stockpiles.

Third, we're taking a critical step to drive our economic expansion, enhance our security, and protect the bounty and beauty of the hemisphere with a new energy-climate partnership of the Americas that I proposed. Through this partnership, we will harness the progress being made by nations across the hemisphere, from Brazil's work on biofuels, to Chile's investments

in solar power, to Mexico's efforts to curb greenhouse gas emissions, to El Salvador's work on geothermal energy.

This is a voluntary and flexible partnership that nations across this region are invited to join, a partnership that will enhance energy efficiency, improve our infrastructure, and support investments that can make energy more affordable. In doing so, we can create the jobs of the future, promote renewable sources of energy, and make the Americas a model for cooperation.

Now, meeting these challenges and seizing these opportunities will not be easy; it will not happen overnight. Our efforts to work together may be strained at times by disagreements, and one of the things that I think is going to be critical to do is to make sure that we are working with our respective teams to encourage implementation at a more granular level. Sometimes at these summits we have very lofty statements; there's got to be follow-through across the way.

But I firmly believe that if we're willing to break free from the arguments and ideologies of an earlier era and continue to act, as we have at this summit, with a sense of mutual responsibility and mutual respect and mutual interest, then each of our nations can come out of this challenging period stronger and more prosperous, and we can advance opportunity, equality, and security across the Americas.

So with that, let me take some questions. I'm going to start with Edna Schmidt at Univision.

Meetings With Central and South American Leaders

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. The spotlight on your visit here was on the handshake and smiles with Hugo Chavez, but we didn't see much interaction with some of the other leftist leaders of the region like Daniel Ortega, Rafael Correa, or Evo Morales, who yesterday accused the United States of still interfering in its affairs and, even though it's too soon, he says, of not seeing much of change. Did you have any private meetings with any of these leaders, and if so, can you tell us what was discussed?

The President. Well, I had meetings with all the leaders involved, including Daniel Ortega, who was the chairperson of the Central American meeting. I had very cordial conversations with President Morales and President Correa. And I think it's just that President Chavez is better at positioning the cameras.

And in all these conversations, here's what I emphasized: that we're not going to agree on every issue, but that as long as we are respectful of democratic processes, as long as we're respectful of principles of sovereignty for all nations, that we can find areas where we can work in common. And my sense is, if you talk to any of those leaders, that they would say that they feel encouraged about the possibility of a more constructive relationship.

Now, specifically on the Bolivia issue, I just want to make absolutely clear that I am absolutely opposed and condemn any efforts at violent overthrows of democratically elected governments, wherever it happens in the hemisphere. That is not the policy of our Government. That is not how the American people expect their Government to conduct themselves. And so I want to be as clear as possible on that.

But one of the things that I mentioned in both public remarks as well as private remarks is that the United States, obviously, has a history in this region that's not always appreciated from the perspective of some, but that what we need to do is try to move forward, and that I am responsible for how this administration acts, and we will be respectful to those democratically elected governments, even when we disagree with them.

Scott Wilson, Washington Post.

U.S. Foreign Policy

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You said during the summit that you were here not to debate the past. You also said we must learn from our history. You just referred to this history. What have you learned over 2 days of listening to leaders here about how U.S. policy is perceived in the region? And can you name a specific policy that you will change as a result of what you've heard?

The President. Well, I think that what was reemphasized in all the discussions that I had was a sense, on the one hand, that the United States is critical to the economic growth and opportunities in the region. Even the most vociferous critics of the United States also want to make sure that the United States economy is working and growing again, because there is extraordinary dependence on the United States for exports, for remittances.

And so in that sense people are rooting for America's success. I do think that there is a strain of thought in the region that, in the past, many of the problems surrounding economic growth and opportunity or the lack thereof resulted because of a too rigid application of a free market doctrine imposed by the IMF, what is termed the "Washington consensus."

I think in some cases, those issues have been addressed. At the G–20 summit, for example, we talked about the need to create a reformed international financial—set of international financial institutions that provide additional flexibility, provide more voice and vote to developing countries. In some cases, it may be just a carryover of knee-jerk anti-American sentiment or simply differences in terms of economic theories and how the economies should grow.

One thing that I thought was interesting—and I knew this in a more abstract way but it was interesting in very specific terms—hearing from these leaders who when they spoke about Cuba, talked very specifically about the thousands of doctors from Cuba that are dispersed all throughout the region and upon which many of these countries heavily depend. And it's a reminder for us in the United States that if our only interaction with many of these countries is drug interdiction, if our only interaction is military, then we may not be developing the connections that can, over time, increase our influence and have a beneficial effect when we need to try to move policies that have—are of concern to us forward in the region.

And I think that's why it's so important that in our interactions not just here in the hemisphere but around the world, that we recognize that our military power is just one arm of our power, and that we have to use our diplomatic and development aid in more intelligent ways so that people can see very practical, concrete improvements in the lives of ordinary persons as a consequence of U.S. foreign policy.

Chuck Todd.

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Building a little bit, actually, on the answer that you had there, you've been—three continents now in the last 3 weeks, 40-odd world leaders that you've been in the same room with——

The President. Time to get home. [*Laughter*]

Q. Yes, exactly.

The President. I'm going to Iowa next week. [*Laughter*]

Q. Yes, talk about deja vu.

The President. Yes.

Q. What should—a lot of people are going to start trying to write about the "Obama doctrine." What should be—what are the pillars of that that you think people should be taking away? After observing you on the world stage the last 3 weeks, what are the pillars of the Obama doctrine?

The President. Well, you know, I will leave it up to you, Chuck, to write the definitive statement on Obamaism. But there are a couple of principles that I've tried to apply across the board. Number one, that the United States remains the most powerful, wealthiest nation on Earth, but we're only one nation, and that the problems that we confront, whether it's drug cartels, climate change, terrorism, you name it, can't be solved just by one country. And I think if you start with that approach, then you are inclined to listen and not just talk.

And so in all these meetings what I've said is, we have some very clear ideas in terms of where the international community should be moving. We have some very specific national interests, starting with safety and security, that we have to attend to, but we recognize that other countries have good ideas too, and we want to hear them. And the fact that a good idea comes from a small country like a Costa Rica should not somehow diminish the fact that it's a good idea. I think people appreciate that. So that's number one.

Number two, I think that—I feel very strongly that when we are at our best the United States represents a set of universal values and

ideals—the idea of democratic practices, the idea of freedom of speech and religion, the idea of a civil society where people are free to pursue their dreams and not be imposed upon constantly by their government. So we've got a set of ideas that I think have broad applicability. But what I also believe is that other countries have different cultures, different perspectives, and are coming out of different histories, and that we do our best to promote our ideals and our values by our example.

And so if we are practicing what we preach and if we occasionally confess to having strayed from our values and our ideals, that strengthens our hand, that allows us to speak with greater moral force and clarity around these issues.

And again, I think people around the world appreciate that we're not suggesting we are holding ourselves to one set of standards and we're going to hold you to another set of standards; that we're not simply going to lecture you, but we're rather going to show through how we operate the benefits of these values and ideals.

And the—as a consequence of listening, believing that there aren't junior partners and senior partners in the international stage, I don't think that we suddenly transform every foreign policy item that's on the agenda. I know that in each of these meetings the question has been, well, did you get something specific? What happened here? What happened there?

Countries are going to have interests, and changes in foreign policy approaches by my administration aren't suddenly going to make all those interests that may diverge from ours disappear. What it does mean, though, is, at the margins, they are more likely to want to cooperate than not cooperate. It means that where there is resistance to a particular set of policies that we're pursuing, that resistance may turn out just to be based on old preconceptions or ideological dogmas that, when they're cleared away, it turns out that we can actually solve a problem.

And so we're still going to have very tough negotiations on a whole host of issues. In Europe, people believe in our plan for Afghanistan, but their politics are still such that it's hard for leaders to want to send more troops into Afghanistan. That's not going to change because I'm popular in Europe or leaders think that I've been respectful towards them. On the other hand, by having established those better relations, it means that among the population there's more confidence that working with the United States is beneficial, and they are going to try to do more than they might otherwise have done.

And here in this hemisphere, I think as a consequence of a summit like this, it becomes much easier for our friends—countries like Mexico or Colombia, that are stalwart partners with us on issues like drug trafficking—it becomes much easier for them to work with us because their neighbors and their populations see us as a force for good or at least not a force for ill.

Jake [Jake Tapper, ABC News].

Cuba

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You've heard from a lot of Latin America leaders here who want the U.S. to lift the embargo against Cuba. You've said that you think it's an important leverage to not lift it. But in 2004, you did support lifting the embargo. You said, it's failed to provide the source of raising standards of living, it's squeezed the innocent, and it's time for us to acknowledge that this particular policy has failed. I'm wondering, what made you change your mind about the embargo?

The President. Well, 2004, that seems just eons ago. What was I doing in 2004?

Q. Running for Senate.

The President. Is it while—I was running for Senate. There you go. Look, the—what I said and what I think my entire administration has acknowledged is, is that the policy that we've had in place for 50 years hasn't worked the way we want it to. The Cuban people are not free. And that's our lodestone, our North Star, when it come to our policy in Cuba.

It is my belief that we're not going to change that policy overnight, and the steps that we took, I think, were constructive in sending a signal that we'd like to see a transformation. But I am persuaded that it is important to send the signal that issues of

political prisoners, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, democracy—that those continue to be important, that they're not simply something to be brushed aside.

What was remarkable about the summit was that every leader who was participating was democratically elected. We might not be happy with the results of some elections; we might be happier with others; we might disagree with some of the leaders, but they all were conferred the legitimacy of a country speaking through democratic channels. And that is not yet there in Cuba.

Now, I think that as a starting point, it's important for us not to think that completely ignoring Cuba is somehow going to change policy, and the fact that you had Raul Castro say he's willing to have his Government discuss with ours not just issues of lifting the embargo, but issues of human rights, political prisoners, that's a sign of progress.

And so we're going to explore and see if we can make some further steps. There are some things that the Cuban government could do. They could release political prisoners. They could reduce charges on remittances to match up with the policies that we have put in place to allow Cuban American families to send remittances. It turns out that Cuba charges an awful lot; they take a lot off the top. That would be an example of cooperation where both governments are working to help Cuban families and raise standards of living in Cuba.

So there are going to be some ways that the Cuban Government, I think, can send some signals that they're serious about pursuing change. And I'm hopeful that over time the overwhelming trend in the hemisphere will occur in Cuba as well. And I think that all of the governments here were encouraged by the fact that we had taken some first steps. Many of them want us to go further, but they at least see that we are not dug in into policies that were formulated before I was born.

Bill Plante [CBS News]. No? Bill is not here? That's shocking. [*Laughter*] Dan [Dan Lothian] from CNN. Where's Dan?

U.S. Foreign Policy

Q. During the campaign you were criticized by some within your own party for perhaps not being able to be tough on foreign policy matters. Now you've had this friendly interaction with Mr. Chavez. Are you concerned at all about how this might be perceived back in the U.S. as perhaps being too soft? Already one Senator is calling this friendly interaction irresponsible. And as a quick follow-up, if I may, when you got the book from Mr. Chavez, what did you really think? [*Laughter*]

The President. I think it was a nice gesture to give me a book; I'm a reader. And you're right, we had this debate throughout the campaign, and the whole notion was that somehow if we showed courtesy or opened up dialog with governments that had previously been hostile to us, that that somehow would be a sign of weakness. The American people didn't buy it. And there's a good reason the American people didn't buy it, because it doesn't make sense.

You take a country like Venezuela—I have great differences with Hugo Chavez on matters of economic policy and matters of foreign policy. His rhetoric directed at the United States has been inflammatory. There have been instances in which we've seen Venezuela interfere with some of the countries that surround Venezuela in ways that I think are a source of concern.

On the other hand, Venezuela is a country whose defense budget is probably 1/600th of the United States. They own CITGO. It's unlikely that as a consequence of me shaking hands or having a polite conversation with Mr. Chavez that we are endangering the strategic interests of the United States. I don't think anybody can find any evidence that that would do so. Even within this imaginative crowd, I think you would be hard-pressed to paint a scenario in which U.S. interests would be damaged as a consequence of us having a more constructive relationship with Venezuela.

So if the question, Dan, is, how does this play politically, I don't know. One of the benefits of my campaign and how I've been trying to operate as President is, I don't worry about the politics. I try to figure out what's right in terms of

American interests, and on this one I think I'm right.

Julianna [Julianna Goldman, Bloomberg News], who, by the way, I saw getting jostled a lot during the photo sprays. Cameramen, I just want you to know. [*Laughter*]

National Economy/U.S. Banking System

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I'd like to ask a question about an issue back home about the economy and the stress tests and whether or not you expect that along with the stress tests, with the results next month, that one or more executives will be asked to step down as it was with the auto restructuring plans.

The President. Okay, well, I don't want to speculate ahead of the release of the stress test numbers. I think what you'll see is that, not surprisingly, different banks are in different situations. They're going to need different levels of assistance from taxpayers and, as I've said before, if taxpayer money is involved then I've got a responsibility to ensure some transparency and accountability in the operations of those businesses. We try to use as light a touch as we can, but I'm not going to simply put taxpayer money into a black hole where you're not going to see results or some exit strategy, so that taxpayers, ultimately, are relieved of these burdens.

We've seen, I think, some progress in certain parts of the banking sector. As I mentioned before, I'm encouraged by the number of refinancings and mortgages that's already taking place, but I have also said we're not out of the woods. This is still a difficult time for the economy. Credit is still contracted; banks still are not lending at previous levels; the nonbank sector that accounted for 40 percent of credit prior to this crisis still hasn't recovered the way it should. And we're still having to take a series of extraordinary steps.

So we'll have more information as these stress test numbers are provided. I haven't seen all of them yet. They're being completed, I think, while we were on this trip. But I'm sure that we'll have more to say about this over the next several days. Okay?

April [April Ryan, American Urban Radio Networks]. What, you look surprised. [*Laughter*] Come on, April; I hope you've got a good question.

United Nations World Conference against Racism

Q. I've got some good—I have two, actually.

The President. All right, well, you only get one, though. [*Laughter*]

Q. I'll take that one. Well, Mr. President, as you're concluding your summit here and the meeting in Mexico, there is a U.S.—a U.N. conference, the world conference on racism in Geneva tomorrow. The U.S. is boycotting. And what say you about that? And is Zionism a main issue in the reason why the U.S. is boycotting the racism conference?

The President. Well, let me, first of all, say that I believe in the United Nations. I believe in the possibility of the United Nations serving as an effective forum to deal with a whole host of transnational conflicts. And so I want to be as encouraging as I can, and I've said that to the General-Secretary. For that reason, we're actually—have pursued a seat on the Human Rights Commission, the U.N. Human Rights Commission, because even though up until this point we haven't been very pleased with how it's operated, we think that it's worthwhile for us to go in there and try to make it into a constructive organization because of the extraordinary range of human rights violations that exist around the world. And I think America should be a leader; we can't opt out of those discussions.

Now, in that same spirit, I would love to be involved in a useful conference that addressed continuing issues of racism and discrimination around the globe, which, by the way, are not a particular province of any one country. Obviously, we've had our own experiences with racial discrimination, but if you come down to Central and South America and the Caribbean, they have all kinds of stories to tell about racial discrimination.

Somebody mentioned earlier President Morales. Whatever I think about his politics, the fact that he is the first indigenous—person of indigenous background to be elected in a country that has a enormous indigenous

population indicates how much work remains to be done around the world.

So we would love to engage constructively in a discussion like that. Here's the problem: You had a previous conference—I believe it was in 2001, maybe it was 2002—I think it was 2001—in which it became a session through which folks expressed antagonism towards Israel in ways that were oftentimes completely hypocritical and counterproductive. And we expressed in the run-up to this conference our concerns that if you incorporated—if you adopted all the language from 2001, that's just not something we could sign up for.

So if we have a clean start, a fresh start, we're happy to go. If you're incorporating a previous conference that we weren't involved with that raised a whole set of objectionable provisions, then we couldn't participate, or it wouldn't be worth it for us to participate because we couldn't get past that particular issue.

And unfortunately, even though I think other countries made great efforts to accommodate some of our concerns and assured us that this conference would be more constructive, our participation would have involved putting our imprimatur on something that we just don't believe.

So what we've said—and I said this to Secretary-General Moon who was here addressing the summit—we're happy to work with them to see if we can move forward on some of these issues. Hopefully some concrete steps come out of the conference that we can partner with other countries on to actually reduce discrimination around the globe. But this wasn't an opportunity to do it.

So—okay? I think the—it's warm, and I've got to get home. But I appreciate you guys. Thank you.

By the way, whose wallet is this? Is this one of my staff's here? Did you guys put this on—is that yours, Marvin? That was to prop up my remarks? Okay, I don't want you to forget it. Thank you, guys.

Iranian American Journalist Incarcerated in Iran

Q. Mr. President, you haven't addressed the Iranian journalist. I think people would like to hear about that.

The President. I will. Obviously, I am gravely concerned with her safety and well-being. We are working to make sure that she is properly treated and to get more information about the disposition of her case.

She is an American citizen, and I have complete confidence that she was not engaging in any sort of espionage. She is an Iranian American who was interested in the country which her family came from, and it is appropriate for her to be treated as such and to be released.

We are going to be in contact with—through our Swiss intermediaries—with the Iranian Government and want to ensure that we end up seeing a proper disposition of this case.

Okay? Thanks. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:17 p.m. at the Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Patrick Manning of Trinidad and Tobago and his wife Hazel; President Daniel Ortega Saavedra of Nicaragua; President Juan Evo Morales Ayma of Bolivia; President Rafael Correa Delgado of Ecuador; President Hugo Chavez Frias of Venezuela; President Raul Castro Ruz of Cuba; Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations; White House trip director Marvin Nicholson; and journalist Roxana Saberi. A reporter referred to Sen. John Ensign.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the New Arrangements to Borrow Fund
April 16, 2009

Dear _____:

I write to ask you to support an essential component of our overall strategy to restore the health of the U.S. economy and financial system: the U.S. proposal to expand significantly the resources available to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) through its

New Arrangements to Borrow (NAB) and a set of other proposals to strengthen the IMF.

The NAB is a mechanism through which the IMF can obtain supplemental financial resources for use in its lending operations when the IMF's existing resources are substantially drawn down in the face of circumstances that threaten the stability of the international monetary system. The NAB with 26 members was established in 1998, building upon a similar mechanism, the General Arrangements to Borrow, which was created in 1962. The size of the NAB is currently $50 billion.

The global economic crisis is seriously affecting emerging markets and developing countries, which are now experiencing severe economic declines and a massive withdrawal of capital. The deteriorating conditions threaten to worsen the recessions in these countries and could cause currencies to collapse. Together, these factors, particularly if they become more acute, will further lower global growth and, as we saw during the Asian financial crisis, they will cause U.S. growth, jobs, and exports to fall even more sharply.

Treasury Secretary Geithner concluded that the size of the NAB is woefully inadequate to deal with the type of severe economic and financial crisis we are experiencing, and I agree with him. For that reason, we proposed an expansion of the NAB of up to $500 billion (of which the U.S. participation would be up to $100 billion) and a further enlargement of its membership to include increased participation by the major emerging market countries, in particular China and India. We consulted broadly with the Congress on our NAB proposal before we raised it internationally at the G–20 Summit. Other countries are looking to the United States to deliver on our commitment.

The meeting in London with the leaders of the other G–20 countries focused on adopting a common strategy to restart global growth and secure international financial stability for the future. A central element of that strategy was the U.S. proposal to increase the capacity of the IMF to lend to its members, primarily to developing and emerging market countries facing economic and financial difficulties. We also pledged our support for several other aspects of our participation in the IMF that require congressional action: an IMF quota reform to allow the IMF's governance structure to keep pace with the rapid growth and increasing significance of dynamic emerging economies; an IMF gold sale and related amendments to reform the IMF's income model and provide support for the poorest countries; and an amendment to permit a special one-time allocation of Special Drawing Rights, reserve assets created by the IMF based on a basket of key currencies, that will increase global liquidity and will support the IMF in promoting global financial stability. These reforms should be considered alongside the proposed NAB expansion.

An increase in our participation in the NAB requires the Congress to pass legislation authorizing such participation, which is what we are requesting. Such participation effectively represents an exchange of assets rather than a budgetary expenditure, and it will not result in budgetary outlays or any increase in the deficit. That is because when the United States transfers dollars to the IMF under the NAB, the United States receives in exchange another monetary asset in the form of a liquid, interest-bearing claim on the IMF, which is backed by the IMF's strong financial position, including its significant holdings of gold. Similarly, our increased participation in the NAB does not constitute a request for budget authority; it is conceptually similar to investing government funds in a financial asset with minimal or no risk and is consistent with the findings of the 1967 President's Commission on Budget Concepts.

Our proposal to increase U.S. participation in the NAB by up to $100 billion as part of an overall increase of $500 billion was warmly endorsed by the G–20 Leaders. We jointly committed to making substantial progress in reforming and expanding the NAB by the spring IMF meetings on April 25 with a view to having the NAB expansion in place within a few months. I am asking for your help to deliver on that commitment by supporting inclusion of the NAB and related IMF proposals in the most timely legislative vehicle that will enable

the United States to act quickly. Rapid progress is essential to the restoration of confidence in the global economy and financial system so that the global economy can emerge from recession to recovery and to sustained growth.

Therefore, I would welcome your strong endorsement of speedy congressional action on these important initiatives and your agreement that a reformed and expanded NAB as part of a stronger and more responsive IMF is essential to reestablishing the well-being of the global economy and financial system and, consequently, our own economic recovery.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi; House Minority Leader John A. Boehner; Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid; and Senate Minority Leader Addison M. "Mitch" McConnell. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 20.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Cabinet Members and an Exchange With Reporters

April 20, 2009

The President. Hello, guys. Good to see you. Well, I just had my first official Cabinet meeting. We have one future Cabinet member missing, but everybody else is present and accounted for.

I delivered a few messages. Number one, I am extraordinarily proud of the talent, the diversity, and the work ethic of this team in an unprecedented situation where we had to hit the ground running and get enormous amount done in the first 3 months. Everybody here has performed, I think, at the highest levels. And I'm extraordinarily proud of the quality of this Cabinet.

Number two, I emphasized to this Cabinet that we have had to take some extraordinary steps in order to shore up our financial system and to deal with an unprecedented economic crisis. And as a consequence, we've had to spend a significant amount of money, both on the Recovery Act to create and save jobs and to lay the foundations for long-term sustainable economic growth, also, in order to make sure that the financial systems are strong enough to start lending to businesses and communities so that we can start creating jobs again. That was the right thing to do, and the necessary thing to do.

However, moving forward, we have an obligation, as I talked about in my weekly radio address—or Internet address now—to make sure that this Government is as efficient as possible, and that every taxpayer dollar that is spent is being spent wisely. Joe Bidenis doing an outstanding job working with all the Cabinet members to make sure that the Recovery Act is moving out in—with unprecedented transparency and effectiveness, and I'm very grateful to him and his team for the work that's being done there.

Many of the agencies have already taken some extraordinary steps to consolidate, streamline, and improve their practices. Just a couple of examples: Veterans Affairs has canceled or delayed 26 conferences, saving nearly $17.8 million, and they're using less expensive alternatives like videoconferencing. The USDA, under Secretary Vilsack, is working to combine a hundred and—1,500 employees from seven office locations into a single facility in 2011, which we estimate will save $62 million over a 15-year lease term. Janet Napolitano, at the Department of Homeland Security, estimates that they can save up to $52 million over 5 years just by purchasing office supplies in bulk.

So there are a host of efficiencies that can be gained without increasing our personnel or our budget, but rather decreasing the amount of money that's spent on unnecessary things in order to fund some of the critical initiatives that we've all talked about. Obviously, Bob Gates just came out with a historic budget proposal with respect to the Pentagon, and we expect to follow up with significant procurement reform that's going to make an enormous difference.

So none of these savings by themselves are going to solve our long-term fiscal problems, but taken together they can make a difference, and they send a signal that we are serious about changing how government operates.

So one of the things that—messages that I delivered today to all members of the Cabinet was: As well as you've already done, you're going to have to do more. I'm asking for all of them to identify at least $100 million in additional cuts to their administrative budgets, separate and apart from the work that Peter Orszag and the rest of our team are doing to go line by line with the budget and identify programmatic cuts that need to be made.

And in the next few weeks, we expect to cut at least 100 current programs in the Federal budget so that we can free up those dollars in order to put them to use for critical areas like health care, education, energy, our foreign policy apparatus, which is so important.

So I'm very pleased about the work that we've done. But we've got more to do. And one of the things that everybody here is mindful of is that as we move forward dealing with this extraordinary economic crisis, we also have a deficit, a confidence gap when it comes to the American people. And we've got to earn their trust. They've got to feel confident that their dollars are being spent wisely. And I have every confidence that the team that I've put together is going to be able to deliver on that efficiency and productivity in the weeks, months, and years to come.

Okay. Thank you, everybody. Thank you.

Federal Budget

Q. A hundred million dollars, isn't that a drop in the bucket, sir?

The President. It is, and that's what I just said. None of these things alone are going to make a difference. But cumulatively, they make an extraordinary difference because they start setting a tone. And so what we're going to do is line by line, page by page, $100 million there, $100 million here, pretty soon, even in Washington, it adds up to real money.

All right, thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:18 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary-designate of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius; Secretary of Agriculture Thomas J. Vilsack; Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano; and Peter R. Orszag, Director, Office of Management and Budget. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Remarks at the Central Intelligence Agency in Langley, Virginia
April 20, 2009

Well, thank you for the extraordinary welcome, and thanks for those of you who prepared, from the CIA gift shop the T-shirts, the caps, the water bottles. [*Laughter*] Michelle and the girls will appreciate that very much. [*Laughter*]

It is a great honor to be here with the men and women of the CIA. I've been eager to come out here to Langley for some time so I can deliver a simple message to you in person on behalf of the American people: Thank you. Thank you for all the work that you do to protect the American people and the freedom that we all cherish.

The CIA is fundamental to America's national security. And I want you to know that that's why I nominated such an outstanding public servant and close friend, Leon Panetta, to lead the Agency. He is one of our Nation's finest public servants, he has my complete confidence, and he is a strong voice in my national security team, as well as a strong advocate for the men and women of the CIA.

I also benefit from the counsel of several Agency veterans, chief among them, Steve Kappes, who has stayed on to serve as Leon's Deputy, and he's done outstanding work. I have to add, just as an aside by the way, I just met with a smaller group of about 50 so we could have a dialog, and all of you look really young. [*Laughter*] And so to have a graybeard—literally and figuratively—like Steve

Kappes here, I think, is absolutely critical. [*Laughter*] I also want you to know that we have one of your own, John Brennan, who is doing a terrific job as my adviser for counterterrorism and homeland security. And we are very grateful for the work that he does and the insights that he brings from his long years of service here at the CIA. And I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the extraordinary former CIA officer and Director of Central Intelligence, Bob Gates, who is also part of our Cabinet and every once in a while gives me a few tips.

Let me share with you just a few thoughts about the situation in which we find ourselves. First, I want to underscore the importance of the CIA. When the CIA was founded, you were focused on one overarching threat, the Soviet Union. And for decades, the CIA carried out a critically important mission. And with the end of the cold war, some wondered how important the CIA would be to our future. Now we know.

Here in the 21st century, we've learned that the CIA is more important than ever, for, as Leon mentioned, we face a wide range of unconventional challenges: stateless terrorist networks like Al Qaida, the spread of catastrophic weapons, cyber threats, failed states, rogue regimes, persistent conflict, and now we have to add to our list, piracy.

The CIA is unique in the capabilities of collection, analysis, and operation that you bring to bear. So you are an indispensable tool, the tip of the spear in America's intelligence mission and our national security. It is because of you that I can make good decisions. You prove that the key to good intelligence is not simply technology; it's the quality of the men and women who have signed up to serve.

You're on the frontlines against unconventional challenges. You help us understand the world as it is. You support the work of our troops and our diplomats and law enforcement officers. You disrupt terrorist plots, and you're critical to our efforts to destroy terrorist networks. You serve capably, courageously, and from here in Virginia to dangerous outposts around the globe, you make enormous sacrifices on our behalf. So you should be proud of what you do.

Second, you need to know that you've got my full support. For decades, the American people have counted on you to protect them. I know that I've come to personally count on your services; I rely on your reporting and your analysis, which finds its way onto my desk every single day.

And I know you've got a tough job. I know there's no margin for error. And I know there are endless demands for intelligence, and there is an urgent necessity to collect and analyze information and to work seamlessly with other agencies to act on it. And what makes it tougher is when you succeed—as you so often do—that success usually has to stay secret. So you don't get credit when things go good, but you sure get some blame when things don't. Now—[*laughter*]—I got a amen corner out here. [*Laughter*]

Now, in that context I know that the last few days have been difficult. As I made clear in releasing the OLC memos—as a consequence of a court case that was pending and to which it was very difficult for us to mount an effective legal defense—I acted primarily because of the exceptional circumstances that surrounded these memos, particularly the fact that so much of the information was public—had been publicly acknowledged—the covert nature of the information had been compromised.

I have fought to protect the integrity of classified information in the past, and I will do so in the future. And there is nothing more important than protecting the identities of CIA officers. So I need everybody to be clear: We will protect your identities and your security as you vigorously pursue your missions. I will be as vigorous in protecting you as you are vigorous in protecting the American people.

Now, I have put an end to the interrogation techniques described in those OLC memos, and I want to be very clear and very blunt. I've done so for a simple reason, because I believe that our Nation is stronger and more secure when we deploy the full measure of both our power and the power of our values, including the rule of law. I know I can count on you to do exactly that.

There have been some conversations that I've had with senior folks here at Langley in which I think people have expressed

understandable anxiety and concern. So I want to make a point that I just made in the smaller group. I understand that it's hard when you are asked to protect the American people against people who have no scruples and would willingly and gladly kill innocents. Al Qaida is not constrained by a constitution. Many of our adversaries are not constrained by a belief in freedom of speech or representation in court or rule of law. So I'm sure that sometimes it seems as if that means we're operating with one hand tied behind our back or that those who would argue for a higher standard are naive. I understand that. You know, I watch the cable shows once in a while. [*Laughter*]

What makes the United States special, and what makes you special, is precisely the fact that we are willing to uphold our values and our ideals even when it's hard, not just when it's easy, even when we are afraid and under threat, not just when it's expedient to do so. That's what makes us different. So, yes, you've got a harder job, and so do I. And that's okay, because that's why we can take such extraordinary pride in being Americans. And over the long term, that is why I believe we will defeat our enemies, because we're on the better side of history.

So don't be discouraged by what's happened in the last few weeks. Don't be discouraged that we have to acknowledge, potentially, we've made some mistakes. That's how we learn. But the fact that we are willing to acknowledge them and then move forward, that is precisely why I am proud to be President of the United States, and that's why you should be proud to be members of the CIA. [*Applause*] All right.

Third point, I want you to know how much the American people appreciate your service. Sometimes it's hard to acknowledge sacrifices made by the people whose work or even identity must remain secret. And that's part of the enormous burden that you carry when you sign up. You make extraordinary sacrifices giving up parts of your life in service to your country. Many of you take long deployments overseas. You miss seeing your families. You miss weekend barbecues and the birthday parties, watching your children grow up. You can't even exchange in the simplest pleasures of talking about your job or complaining about your job openly. [*Laughter*]

There are few signs of patriotism more powerful than offering to serve out of the limelight. And so many of you have signed up to serve after 9/11—that's partly why you're all so young—fully aware of the dangers before you. You serve courageously, but your courage is only known to a few. You accomplish remarkable things, but the credit you receive is the private knowledge that you've done something to secure this country. That's a sacrifice that's carved into those marble walls. Those 89 stars stand as a testament to both the men and women of the CIA who gave their lives in service to their country and to all who dedicate themselves to the mission of this Agency.

Now we must look forward to the future with confidence. All that you've achieved, I believe that the CIA's best days are still yet to come. And you will have my support and appreciation as you carry on this critical work. We live in dangerous times. I am going to need you more than ever, precisely because we're seeing changes in our foreign policy, and we want to send a new message to the world. That requires better intelligence, not less of it. That means that we're going to have to operate smarter and more effectively than ever. So I'm going to be relying on you, and the American people are going to rely on you. And I hope that you will continue to take extraordinary pride in the challenges that come with the job.

Thank you very much. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:41 p.m. at CIA Headquarters.

Remarks Following a Meeting With King Abdullah II of Jordan and an Exchange With Reporters

April 21, 2009

President Obama. Hello, everybody. Take your time, guys. We're going to answer a few questions.

First of all, I just want to welcome His Majesty King Abdullah to the White House. This is a first visit by a leader of an Arab state. In part, it's reciprocity for the extraordinary hospitality that the King and Queen showed me when I visited Jordan prior to the election, in which the King personally drove me to the airport. And I won't tell you how fast he was going. [*Laughter*]

But more importantly, it's representative of his excellent leadership internationally as well as a unmatched friendship with the United States on a whole range of issues. I think that King Abdullah represents a modern approach to foreign policy making in the Middle East, a approach that is able to see many different sides of an issue, that is, obviously, constantly mindful of Jordanian interests, but also seeks to resolve issues and conflicts in a peaceful and respectful fashion.

We are very pleased to have been able to work so closely with his Government for many years. It is a great friendship between two great countries and two great peoples. And I am confident that that friendship will only be strengthened.

Very briefly, we spoke, obviously, about a Middle East peace process, my commitment as well as his to moving that process forward with some sense of urgency. We spoke about the broader whole range of issues related to Iran and Afghanistan, the issues of terrorism in the region. We spoke about the impact that the economic crisis may be having on both our countries and the need to promote effective international cooperation around those issues. And I'm confident that in the months and years to come our partnership and our friendship will continue to grow. So I'm grateful to him for having visited and look forward to seeing him back in his own country sometime soon.

King Abdullah. Thank you. Mr. President, again, thank you very much for this very kind welcome. We had a wonderful meeting just recently, and I believe it was a meeting of the minds. We are both committed to bringing peace and stability to our part of the world. The President again reaffirming the need for a two-state solution and to move both parties to good negotiations as quickly as possible. He has the full support of my country and the Arab League on this issue. We believe that it is important for all of us to keep our eyes on the prize, and the prize is peace and stability, finally, for all the people of our region.

I'd also like to extend a warm thanks on behalf of many Arabs and Muslims that have really had an outstanding response to the President's outreach to the Muslim Arab world. It has gone down extremely well and really begins, I believe, a new page of mutual respect and mutual understanding between cultures. And I will continue to commit Jordan and myself to working with you, Mr. President. You have given us hope for a bright future for all of us. And America can't be left by itself to do all the heavy lifting, so a group of countries, including Jordan, will do all it's can—we can to support you, Mr. President, in your endeavors. And hopefully, under your tremendous leadership we will finally see peace and stability in our region.

President Obama. Thank you.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President——

President Obama. Yes.

Q. Mr. President, you've raised a lot of positive signals and interest in your commitment to peace and to a two-state solution. What other actions will you be taking to bring about peace, and when do you expect that action to happen? And how does the Arab Peace Initiative feature in such a plan?

President Obama. Well, first of all, we have gone out of our way to complement the efforts of those Arab States that were involved in formulating the Arab Peace Initiative as a very constructive start. And obviously, King Abdullah has taken great steps to ensure that

that sustains itself, in terms of Arab support, even while we have seen a breakdown in negotiations. And that's a significant achievement for which King Abdullah and others deserve credit. So we want to continue to encourage a commitment on the part of the Arab States to the peace process.

I have assigned a special envoy, George Mitchell, who is, you know, I think, as good of a negotiator as there is, and somebody who through assiduous work was able to accomplish or help achieve peace in Northern Ireland. We want that same perseverance and sustained effort on this issue, and we're going to be actively engaged.

We have, obviously, seen the Israeli Government just form recently. Prime Minster Netanyahu will be visiting the United States. I expect to have meetings with him. I've had discussions with the Palestinian counterparts as well as other Arab States around this issue.

My hope would be that over the next several months, that you start seeing gestures of good faith on all sides. I don't want to get into the details of what those gestures might be, but I think that the parties in the region probably have a pretty good recognition of what intermediate steps could be taken as confidence-building measures. And we will be doing everything we can to encourage those confidence-building measures to take place.

Q. Can I follow up on this one, please?

President Obama. Okay, the—I actually have a list, guys. I'm sorry. [*Laughter*] We've got to be fair. Jennifer [Jennifer Loven, Associated Press], you always get a question, so you're not getting one today.

Steve Collinson, AFP [Agence France-Presse].

Q. Mr. President.

President Obama. Go ahead, Steve.

Iran

Q. What are your—what is your comment on the rhetoric yesterday from the Iranian President directed towards Israel? And given that kind of talk and the recent imprisonment of the U.S.-Iranian journalist, do you think that will make it more difficult for you to push forward your diplomatic outreach to Iran?

President Obama. Well, sadly, the rhetoric is not new. This is the kind of rhetoric that we've come to expect from President Ahmadinejad. When I said, during the course of the campaign and repeated after the election, that we were serious about engagement with Iran, it was with no illusions. I was very clear that I found many of the statements that President Ahmadi-nejad made, particularly those directed at Israel, to be appalling and objectionable.

As I've also said before, Iran is a very complicated country with a lot of different power centers. The Supreme Leader, Khamenei, is the person who exercises the most direct control over the policies of the Islamic Republic, and we will continue to pursue the possibility of improved relations and a resolution to some of the critical issues in which there have been differences, particularly around the nuclear issue.

But there's no doubt that the kind of rhetoric you saw from Ahmadi-nejad is not helpful; in fact, it is harmful, not just with respect to the possibility of U.S.-Iranian relations, but I think it actually undermines Iranians' position in as the world as a whole. We weren't at the conference, and what you saw was a whole host of other countries walking out and that language being condoned by people who may be more sympathetic to the long-term aspirations of the Iranian people. So I think it actually hurts Iran's position in the world.

But we are going to continue to take an approach that tough, direct diplomacy has to be pursued without taking a whole host of other options off the table.

Okay. Look, is there somebody you'd like to call on? Go ahead.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. I just want to follow on the previous question. You sent Senator Mitchell to the region to listen. Is he done with the listening now and—because all the signals we have from the Israeli Government basically that they are not in favor of the two-state solution. The opposition is strongly advocating that.

So I wanted to ask also His Majesty, President Obama said that there is positive elements within the Arab Peace Initiative, but he

didn't say what he disagree about. Can you tell us if you have noticed any tangible results, what the disagreement with that, and can the Arab Peace Initiative be the base now for a peace process in the Middle East?

President Obama. Okay. Well, first of all, I think it is very important to recognize that the Israelis now have had a government for a few weeks, and it was a very complicated process for them to put a coalition together. So I think more listening needs to be done. They are going to have to formulate and, I think, solidify their position. So George Mitchell will continue to listen both to Arab partners, to the Palestinians, as well as the Israelis.

But I agree that we can't talk forever, that at some point, steps have to be taken so that people can see progress on the ground. And that will be something that we will expect to take place in the coming months, and we will help, hopefully, to drive a process where each side is willing to build confidence.

I am a strong supporter of a two-state solution. I have articulated that publically, and I will articulate that privately. And I think that there are a lot of Israelis who also believe in a two-state solution. Unfortunately, right now what we've seen, not just in Israel, but within the Palestinian Territories, among the Arab States, worldwide, is a profound cynicism about the possibility of any progress being made whatsoever.

What we want to do is to step back from the abyss, to say, as hard as it is, as difficult as it may be, the prospect of peace still exists, but it's going to require some hard choices, it's going to require resolution on the part of all the actors involved, and it's going to require that we create some concrete steps that all parties can take that are evidence of that resolution. And the United States is going to deeply engage in this process to see if we can make progress.

Now, ultimately, neither Jordan nor the United States can do this for the Israelis and the Palestinians. What we can do is create the conditions and the atmosphere and provide the help and assistance that facilitates an agreement. Ultimately, they've got to make a decision that it is not in the interests of either the Palestinian people or the Israelis to perpetuate the kind of conflict that we've seen for decades now, in which generations of Palestinian and Israeli children are growing up insecure, in an atmosphere of hate. And my hope is, is that the opportunity will be seized. But it's going to take some more work, and we are committed to doing that work.

King Abdullah. I couldn't have said it better myself, Mr. President. I think we're looking now at the positives and not the negatives and seeing how we can sequence events over the next couple of months that allows Israelis and Palestinians and Israelis and Arabs to sit around the table and move this process forward.

President Obama. Good. Now, did I already—are one of you Nadia [Nadia Bilbassy Charters, MBC TV]?

Q. That was me.

President Obama. That was you. Okay. Nadia, I was going to call on you anyway. The——

Q. Mr. President——

President Obama. Jake [Jake Tapper, ABC News], you always get questions, so I'm going to try somebody else.

Q. Mr. President——

President Obama. But I'd better give an American—since—you know, so that we're going back and forth. And Sheryl [Sheryl Gay Stolberg, New York Times], you always get in, so——

Q. I do not always—[*laughter*]——

President Obama. I'm just trying to see if there's anybody unusual. All right, you know what, I'll go back to Jennifer then, since she had her hand up before Sheryl or Jake.

Terrorist Interrogation Procedures/Legal Action

Q. I appreciate it. I want to ask you about the interrogation memos that you released last week—two questions. You were clear about not wanting to prosecute those who carried out the instructions under this legal advice. Can you be that clear about those who devised the policy? And then quickly on a second matter, how do you feel about investigations, whether special—a special commission or something of that nature on the Hill to go back and really look at the issue?

The President. Well, the—look, as I said before, this has been a difficult chapter in our history and one of the tougher decisions that I've had to make as President. On the one hand, we have very real enemies out there. And we rely on some very courageous people, not just in our military but also in the Central Intelligence Agency, to help protect the American people. And they have to make some very difficult decisions because, as I mentioned yesterday, they are confronted with an enemy that doesn't have scruples, that isn't constrained by constitutions, aren't constrained by legal niceties. Having said that, the OLC memos that were released reflected, in my view, us losing our moral bearings. That's why I've discontinued those enhanced interrogation programs.

For those who carried out some of these operations within the four corners of legal opinions or guidance that had been provided from the White House, I do not think it's appropriate for them to be prosecuted. With respect to those who formulated those legal decisions, I would say that that is going to be more of a decision for the Attorney General, within the parameters of various laws, and I don't want to prejudge that. I think that there are a host of very complicated issues involved there.

As a general deal, I think that we should be looking forward and not backwards. I do worry about this getting so politicized that we cannot function effectively and it hampers our ability to carry out critical national security operations.

And so if and when there needs to be a further accounting of what took place during this period, I think for Congress to examine ways that it can be done in a bipartisan fashion, outside of the typical hearing process that can sometimes break down and break it entirely along party lines—to the extent that there are independent participants who are above reproach and have credibility, that would probably be a more sensible approach to take.

I'm not suggesting that that should be done, but I'm saying, if you've got a choice, I think it's very important for the American people to feel as if this is not being dealt with to provide one side or another political advantage, but rather is being done in order to learn some lessons so that we move forward in an effective way.

And the last point I just want to emphasize, as I said yesterday at the CIA when I visited, what makes America special in my view is not just our wealth and the dynamism of our economy and our extraordinary history and diversity. It's that we are willing to uphold our ideals even when they're hard. And sometimes we make mistakes because that's the nature of human enterprise. But when we do make mistakes, then we are willing to go back and correct those mistakes and keep our eye on those ideals and values that have been passed on generation to generation.

And that is what has to continue to guide us as we move forward. And I'm confident that we will be able to move forward, protect the American people effectively, and live up to our values and ideals. And that's not a matter of being naive about how dangerous this world is. As I said yesterday to some of the CIA officials that I met with, I wake up every day thinking about how to keep the American people safe, and I go to bed every night worrying about keeping the American people safe.

I've got a lot of other things on my plate. I've got a big banking crisis, and I've got unemployment numbers that are very high, and we've got an auto industry that needs work. There are a whole things—range of things that during the day occupy me, but the thing that I consider my most profound obligation is keeping the American people safe.

So I do not take these things lightly, and I am not in any way under illusion about how difficult the task is for those people who are on the frontlines every day protecting the American people. So I wanted to communicate a message yesterday to all those who overwhelmingly do so in a lawful, dedicated fashion that I have their back.

All right? Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:23 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Queen Rania of Jordan; U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George J. Mitchell; Prime Minster Benjamin

Netanyahu of Israel; Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khamenei and President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran; and Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr. A reporter referred to journalist Roxana Saberi.

Remarks on Presenting the Commander in Chief's Trophy to the United States Naval Academy Midshipmen
April 21, 2009

Good afternoon, everybody. Please have a seat. Well, welcome to the White House for your sixth straight—[*laughter*]—Commander in Chief Trophy. By now, you guys know your way around here better than I do. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank everybody who is here. Obviously, we want to thank the superintendent, Vice Admiral Jeffrey Fowler. Coach Ken, thank you. We were just talking—he's another local boy from Hawaii. [*Laughter*] He's 4 years younger than me, but apparently we've got some mutual friends.

Congratulations to the cocaptains, Clint and Jarod, for your outstanding season. A few other acknowledgements here, we've got Congressman Dutch Ruppersberger, where's Dutch? There he is right there. Good to see you. Congressman Eric Massa—good to see you, Eric. Congressman John Sarbanes, right here; we have B.J. Penn, the Acting Secretary of the Navy. Good to see you, sir.

And I want to extend a special welcome to Lieutenant Commander Wesley Brown, class of 1949. There he is, right here. Please stand. Wesley was the Academy's first African American graduate. He served his country for 25 years. And the brand new, state-of-the-art Wesley Brown Field House will ensure that class after class of Midshipmen know his legacy for decades to come. So we are very proud of you, sir. Thank you so much for your attendance here today.

The Midshipmen, they've got a lot to be proud of, as we know, six straight bowl games, six consecutive wins over Air Force, most importantly, seven straight wins over Army. [*Laughter*] What can I—I'm not saying anything. [*Laughter*]

You showed incredible perseverance against Temple when you trailed by 20 with 9 minutes to go, tied it, won it in overtime. You won an incredible upset over Wake Forest, even if they got you back at the EagleBank Bowl. We won't talk about that. [*Laughter*] Often overshadowed by your fearsome offense is the most improved defense in the Nation.

And these seniors who are behind us should especially be proud: four straight NCAA rushing titles—team rushing titles, something no team has ever done before, in 4 years, 33 wins, and again, no losses to Army or Air Force.

I understand your unofficial motto is "No Excuses, Nobody Cares"—[*laughter*]. That is my wife Michelle's motto for me also. [*Laughter*] But I know that's what makes Navy football so special; you suit up and you play each week against some of the top teams in the country, and you refuse to let that excuse you from taking the coursework or your military training seriously.

And that's why I'm so proud of this team for leading the NCAA in graduation rates for 4 straight years—the most important statistic of the Midshipmen. In fact, I want to congratulate the entire Navy athletic department, because, as a whole, Navy athletics has led the Nation in graduation rates 4 years in a row. And that's an extraordinarily, extraordinary accomplishment.

So I want to congratulate Coach Ken—as I said, from my original home State, also the first Samoan American head coach in the history of Division I–A, just the third Navy coach since World War II to have a winning record in his first season.

Your starting quarterback is also Hawaiian. Where is he? Kaipo—where is he? This guy right here? [*Laughter*] I hear Kaipo is a pretty easygoing guy. He doesn't get rattled easily, performs under pressure. That's the Hawaiian spirit. That's how we roll. [*Laughter*]

I've been watching Mel Kiper getting ready for this weekend's NFL draft. Where is he?

Mel? I understand that Eric Kettani—where is Eric—right here? One of the top-rated fullbacks in the Nation, he's a big guy. [*Laughter*] Shun White and Tyree Barnes are serious pro prospects as well. Where are they? These guys? Okay, they look good also. [*Laughter*]

But, like all 32 seniors on this team, they're preparing to trade one proud uniform for another, and that's the United States of America's uniform. And even though all of you have won 13 straight against the guys at West Point and Colorado Springs, you're all joining the same team now.

Football, it's said, makes boys into men. But the Academy makes men and women into leaders. And the bonds that you've built and the lessons that you've learned on that field and in your 4 years by the Bay have prepared you to join and lead the finest fighting force in the history of the world.

I want all of you to know that I have no greater honor or greater responsibility than serving as your Commander in Chief. I'm proud of you. And I promise you this: From the minute you put on that uniform to the minute you take it off, and for all the days of your life, this country will stand behind you and will be there for you, because we know that you will be there for us.

So God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. Let's—let's give me a helmet.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:01 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Ken Niumatalolo, head football coach, Clint Sovie and Jarod Bryant, cocaptains, Kaipo-Noa Kaheaku-Enhada, quarterback, Eric Kettani, fullback, Shun White, slot back, and Tyree Barnes, wide receiver, U.S. Naval Academy football team; and Mel Kiper, Jr., football analyst, ESPN.

Remarks on Signing the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act
April 21, 2009

Thank you. Please be seated. Thank you. Well, what an extraordinary day. It is good to be here with all of you.

I want to, first of all, thank President Bill Clinton for joining us here today—where's President Clinton?—[*applause*]—for his lifetime of service to our country, but also the fact that he created AmeriCorps, and that not only made this day possible, it has directly enlisted more than half a million Americans in service to their country, service that has touched the lives of millions more.

Now, it just so happens that one of those people who have been touched by AmeriCorps was FLOTUS, otherwise known as First Lady of the United States—[*laughter*]—Michelle Obama, who ran a AmeriCorps-sponsored program, Public Allies, in Chicago.

I also want to thank former First Lady Rosalynn Carter for being here—[*applause*]—for her advocacy on behalf of those with mental illness, and for her husband's continued good works that inspire us all. I am thrilled to have Caroline Kennedy here—[*applause*]—for carrying on her family's long legacy of service.

To my congressional colleagues who did such a fantastic job on a bipartisan basis ushering this through, starting with the two leaders of the House and the Senate, Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid, I'm grateful to them, and obviously, to Barbara Mikulski and Orrin Hatch, George Miller, the entire delegation who helped to shepherd this through. Please give them a huge round of applause.

To my outstanding Vice President, Joe Biden; to Dr. Jill Biden; a couple of outstanding public servants in their own right, please, a warm welcome for General Colin Powell and his wonderful wife, Alma; for the outstanding mayor of the New York City, Michael Bloomberg; and I've got to give some special props to my fellow Illinoisan, a great friend, Dick Durbin.

Finally, and I know that I've got some prepared remarks, but I just want to go ahead and say it now. There are very few people who have touched the life of this Nation in the

same breadth and the same order of magnitude than the person who is seated right behind me. And so this is just an extraordinary day for him. And I am truly grateful and honored to call him a friend, a colleague, and one of the finest leaders we've ever had, Ted Kennedy.

All right. I want to thank the students and the faculty of the SEED School—[*applause*]—our hosts for today, and their headmaster, Charles Adams. Where's Mr. Adams? Is he here? A shining example of how AmeriCorps alums go on to do great things. This school is a true success story, a place where for 4 of the last 5 years, every graduate from the SEED School was admitted to college, every graduate.

It's a place where service is a core component of the curriculum. And just as the SEED School teaches reading and writing, arithmetic and athletics, it also prepares our young Americans to grow into active and engaged citizens. And what these students come to discover through service is that by befriending a senior citizen, or helping the homeless, or easing the suffering of others, they can find a sense of purpose and renew their commitment to this country that we love.

And that is the spirit in which we gather today, as I sign into law a bill that represents the boldest expansion of opportunities to serve our communities and our country since the creation of AmeriCorps, a piece of legislation named for a man who has not only touched countless lives, but who still sails against the wind, a man who's never stopped asking what he can do for his country, and that's Senator Edward M. Kennedy.

In my Address to a joint session of Congress in February, I asked for swift passage of this legislation, and these folks on the stage came through. So, again, I want to thank wide bipartisan majorities in the House and the Senate who came together to pass this bill, especially Barbara Mikulski, Mike Enzi, Chris Dodd, John McCain, who's not here, Thad Cochran, as well as, on the House side, Representatives Miller and Carolyn McCarthy, Buck McKeon and Howard Berman.

More than anyone else, the new era of service we enter in today has been made possible by the unlikely friendship between these two men, Orrin Hatch and Ted Kennedy. They may be the odd couple of the Senate. [*Laughter*] One is a conservative Republican from Utah; the other is, well, Ted Kennedy. [*Laughter*] But time and again, they placed partnership over partisanship to advance this Nation even in times when we were told that wasn't possible.

Senator Hatch was shaped by his experience as a young missionary serving others, a period he has called the greatest of his life. And last year he approached Senator Kennedy to share his ideas about service. Out of that conversation came this legislation. And last month, at Senator Hatch's selfless request, the Senate unanimously chose to name this bill after his dear friend, Ted. That's the kind of class act that Orrin Hatch is.

Now, Ted's story, and the story of his family, is known to all. It's a story of service. And it's also the story of America, of hard work and sacrifice of generation after generation, some called upon to give more than others, but each committed to the idea that we can make tomorrow better than today. I wouldn't be standing here today if not for the service of others or for the purpose that service gave my own life.

I've told this story before. When I moved to Chicago more than two decades ago to become a community organizer, I wasn't sure what was waiting for me there, but I had always been inspired by the stories of the civil rights movement, and President Kennedy's call to service, and I knew I wanted to do my part to advance the cause of justice and equality.

And it wasn't easy, but eventually, over time, working with leaders from all across these communities, we began to make a difference in neighborhoods that had been devastated by steel plants that had closed down and jobs that had dried up. We began to see a real impact in people's lives. And I came to realize I wasn't just helping people, I was receiving something in return, because through service I found a community that embraced me, citizenship that was meaningful, the direction that I had been seeking. I discovered how my own improbable story fit into the larger story of America.

It's the same spirit of service I've seen across this country. I've met countless people of all ages and walks of life who want nothing more than

to do their part. I've seen a rising generation of young people work and volunteer and turn out in record numbers. They're a generation that came of age amidst the horrors of 9/11 and Katrina, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, an economic crisis without precedent. And yet, despite all this—or more likely because of it—they've become a generation of activists possessed with that most American of ideas, that people who love their country can change it.

They're why the Peace Corps has three applications for every position available last year; why 35,000 young people applied for only 4,000 slots in Teach for America; why AmeriCorps has seen a 400-percent increase in applications in just the past 4 months. And yet, even as so many want to serve, even as so many are struggling, our economic crisis has forced our charities and non-for-profits to cut back.

What this legislation does, then, is to help harness this patriotism and connect deeds to needs. It creates opportunities to serve for students, seniors, and everyone in between. It supports innovation and strengthens the nonprofit sector. And it is just the beginning of a sustained, collaborative, and focused effort to involve our greatest resource, our citizens, in the work of remaking this Nation.

We're doing this because I've always believed that the answer to our challenges cannot come from government alone. Our Government can help to rebuild our economy and lift up our schools and reform health care systems and make sure our soldiers and veterans have everything they need, but we need Americans willing to mentor our eager young children, or care for the sick, or ease the strains of deployment on our military families.

And that's why this bill will expand AmeriCorps from 75,000 slots today to 250,000 in less than a decade. And it's not just for freshly minted college grads. As I said, my wife Michelle left her job at a law firm to be the founding director of an AmeriCorps program in Chicago that trains young people for careers in public service. And Michelle can tell you the transformation that occurred in her life as a consequence of being able to follow her passions, follow her dreams.

Programs like these are a force multiplier; they leverage small numbers of members into thousands of volunteers. And we will focus their service toward solving today's most pressing challenges: clean energy, energy efficiency, health care, education, economic opportunity, veterans, and military families.

We'll invest in ideas that help us meet our common challenges, no matter where those ideas come from. All across America, there are ideas that could benefit millions of Americans if only they were given a chance to take root and to grow, ideas like the one that Eric Adler and Raj Vinnakota had that led to this school and expanded its model to others.

That's why this bill includes a new Social Innovation Fund that will bring nonprofits and foundations and faith-based organizations and the private sector to the table with Government so that we can learn from one another's success stories. We'll invest in ideas that work, leverage private-sector dollars to encourage innovation, expand successful programs to scale and make them work in cities across America.

Because we must prepare our young Americans to grow into active citizens, this bill makes new investments in service learning. And we've increased the AmeriCorps education award and linked it to Pell grant award levels, another step toward our goal of ensuring that every American receives an affordable college education. Because millions of Americans are out of school and out of work, it creates an energy corps that will help people find useful work and gain skills in a growing industry of the future. Because our boomers are the most highly educated generation in history and our seniors live longer and more active lives than ever before, this bill offers new pathways to harness their talent and experience to serve others. And because this historic expansion of the Corporation for National and Community Service requires someone with both bold vision and responsible management

experience, I have chosen Mary [Maria]* Eitel—where's Mary? There she is, stand up, Mary—as its new CEO. The founder and first president of the Nike Foundation, Maria is a smart and innovative thinker, and a leader who shares my belief in the power of service. And I also wanted to thank the Acting CEO, Nicky Goren—where's Nicky?—for guiding the corporation through this transition.

A week from tomorrow marks the 100th day of my administration. In those next 8 days, I ask every American to make an enduring commitment to serving your community and your country in whatever way you can. Visit whitehouse.gov to share your stories of service and success. And together, we will measure our progress not just in the number of hours served or volunteers mobilized, but in the impact our efforts have on the life of this Nation.

We're getting started right away. This afternoon, I'll be joined by President Clinton and Michelle and Joe Biden and Dr. Biden to plant trees in a park not far from here. It's as simple as that. All that's required on your part is a willingness to make a difference. And that is, after all, the beauty of service. Anybody can do it. You don't need to be a community organizer, or a Senator, or a Kennedy—[*laughter*]—or even a President to bring change to people's lives.

When Ted Kennedy makes this point, he also tells a story as elegantly simple as it is profound. An old man walking along a beach at dawn saw a young man pick up a starfish and throwing them out to sea. "Why are you doing that?" the old man inquired. The young man explained that the starfish had been stranded on the beach by a receding tide and would soon die in the daytime sun. "But the beach goes on for miles," the old man said. "And there are so many. How can your effort make any difference?" The young man looked at the starfish in his hand, and without hesitating, threw it to safety in the sea. He looked up at the old man, smiled, and said: "It will make a difference to that one." [*Laughter*]

To Ted, that's more than just a story. For even in the midst of his epic fights on the floor of the Senate to enact sweeping change, he's made a quiet trek to a school not far from the Capitol, week after week, year after year, without cameras or fanfare, to sit down and read with one solitary child.

Ted Kennedy is that young man who will not rest until we've made a difference in the life of every American. He walks down that beach, and he keeps on picking up starfish, tossing them into the sea. And as I sign this legislation, I want all Americans to take up that spirit of the man for whom this bill is named, of a President who sent us to the Moon, of a dreamer who always asked "Why not?," of a younger generation that carries the torch of a single family that has made an immeasurable difference in the lives of countless families.

We need your service right now, at this moment in history. I'm not going to tell you what your role should be; that's for you to discover. But I'm asking you to stand up and play your part. I'm asking you to help change history's course, put your shoulder up against the wheel. And if I—if you do, I promise you, your life will be richer, our country will be stronger, and someday, years from now, you may remember it as the moment when your own story and the American story converged, when they came together, and we met the challenges of our new century.

Thank you very much, everybody. I'm going to go sign this bill.

[*At this point, the President signed the bill.*]

All right, everybody, this bill has been signed.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:56 p.m. at the SEED School of Washington, DC. In his remarks, he referred to Caroline B. Kennedy, author and daughter of former President John F. Kennedy; former Secretary of State Colin L. Powell; and Eric Alder and Rajiv Vinnakota, cofounders and managing directors, SEED Foundation. H.R. 1388, approved April 21, was assigned Public Law No. 111–13.

* White House correction.

Message to the Congress Certifying Exports to the People's Republic of China
April 21, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

In accordance with the provisions of section 1512 of the Strom Thurmond National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1999 (Public Law 105–261), I hereby certify to the Congress that the export of one continuous mixer to be used to manufacture conductive polymer compounds to be further processed to make circuit protection devices, one jet mill to be used for particle size reduction of pigments and other powder products for cosmetic formulations, and one filament winding cell to be used to manufacture fiberglass assembly shelter poles for use in tents and shelters is not detrimental to the U.S. space launch industry, and that the material and equipment, including any indirect technical benefit that could be derived from these exports, will not measurably improve the missile or space launch capabilities of the People's Republic of China.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
April 21, 2009.

Remarks at Trinity Structural Towers Manufacturing Plant in Newton, Iowa
April 22, 2009

Thank you so much. Thank you, Rich, for the great introduction. Thank you very much. Please, everybody have a seat.

It is good to be back in Newton, and it's a privilege to be here at Trinity Structural Towers. I've got a couple of special thank yous that I want to make, because I've got a lot of old friends, not old in years, but been friends for a long time now. First of all, your outstanding Governor, Chet Culver, please give him a big round of applause. His wonderful wife, Mari, I see over here. She's not on the card, but—[*applause*]. My outstanding Secretary of Agriculture, who I plucked from Iowa, Tom Vilsack, and his wonderful wife Christie Vilsack. We've got the attorney general of Iowa, one of my cochairs when I ran in the Iowa caucus and nobody could pronounce my name, Tom Miller; my other cochair, Mike Fitzgerald, treasurer of Iowa. We got the Iowa Secretary of State, Mike Mauro—there he is. We've got your outstanding Member of Congress who's working hard for Newton all the time, Leonard Boswell; and your own pride of Newton, Mayor Chaz Allen. There he is, back there. It's good to see you again, Chaz.

It is terrific to be here, and by the way, I've got a whole bunch of folks here who were active in the campaign, and precinct captains. And I just want to thank all of them for showing up, and to all the great workers who are here at this plant, thank you.

I just had a terrific tour of the facility led by several of the workers and managers who operate this plant. It wasn't too long ago, as Rich said, that Maytag closed its operations in Newton. And hundreds of jobs were lost. These floors were dark and silent. The only signs of a once thriving enterprise were the cement markings where the equipment had been before they were boxed up and carted away.

Look at what we see here today. This facility is alive again with new industry. This community is still going through some tough times. If you talk to your neighbors and friends, I know they—the community still hasn't fully recovered from the loss of Maytag. Not everybody's been rehired. But more than 100 people will now be employed at this plant, maybe more, if we keep on moving. Many of the same folks who had lost their jobs when Maytag shut its doors now are finding once again their ability to make great products.

Now, obviously, things aren't exactly the same as they were with Maytag, because now you're using the materials behind me to build

towers to support some of the most advanced wind turbines in the world. When completed, these structures will hold up blades that can generate as much as 2.5 megawatts of electricity, enough energy to power hundreds of homes. At Trinity, you are helping to lead the next energy revolution. But you're also heirs to the last energy revolution.

Think about it: Roughly a century and a half ago, in the late 1950s [1850s],* the Seneca Oil Company hired an unemployed train conductor named Edwin Drake to investigate the oil springs of Titusville, Pennsylvania. Around this time, oil was literally bubbling up from the ground, but nobody knew what to do with it. It had limited economic value and often all it did was ruin crops or pollute drinking water.

Now, people were starting to refine oil for use as fuel. Collecting oil remained time consuming, though, and it was back-breaking, and it was costly. It wasn't efficient, as workers harvested what they could find in the shallow ground, they'd literally scoop it up. But Edwin Drake had a plan. He purchased a steam engine, and he built a derrick, and he began to drill.

And months passed, and progress was slow. The team managed to drill into the bedrock just a few feet each day. And crowds gathered, and they mocked Mr. Drake. They thought him and the other diggers were foolish. The well that they were digging even earned the nickname, "Drake's Folly." But Drake wouldn't give up. And he had an advantage: total desperation. It had to work. And then one day, it finally did.

One morning, the team returned to the creek to see crude oil rising up from beneath the surface. And soon, Drake's well was producing what was then an astonishing amount of oil, perhaps 10, 20 barrels every day. And then speculators followed, and they built similar rigs as far as the eye could see. In the next decade, the area would produce tens of millions of barrels of oil. And as the industry grew, so did the ingenuity of those who sought to profit from it, as competitors developed new techniques to drill and transport oil to drive down costs and gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

Now, our history is filled with such stories, stories of daring talent, of dedication to an idea even when the odds are great, of the unshakeable belief that in America, all things are possible. And this has been especially true in energy production. From the first commercially viable steamboat developed by Robert Fulton to the first modern solar cell developed at Bell Labs, from the experiments of Benjamin Franklin to harness the energy of lightning to the experiments of Enrico Fermi to harness the power contained in the atom, America has always led the world in producing and harnessing new forms of energy.

But just as we've led the global economy in developing new sources of energy, we've also led in consuming energy. While we make up less than 5 percent of the world's population, we produce roughly a quarter of the world's demand for oil.

And this appetite comes now at a tremendous cost to our economy. It's the cost measured by our trade deficit. Twenty percent of what we spend on imports is the price of our oil imports. We send billions of dollars overseas to oil-exporting nations, and I think all of you know many of them are not our friends. It's the same costs attributable to our vulnerability, to the volatility of oil markets. Every time the world oil market goes up, you're getting stuck at the pump. It's the cost we feel in shifting weather patterns that are already causing record-breaking droughts, unprecedented wildfires, more intense storms.

It's a cost we've known ever since the gas shortages of the 1970s. And yet, for more than 30 years, too little's been done about it. There's a lot of talk of action when oil prices skyrocket like they did last summer and everybody says we got to do something about energy independence, but then it slips from the radar when oil prices start falling like they have recently. So we shift from shock to indifference time and again, year after year.

We can't afford that approach anymore, not when the cost for our economy, for our country,

* White House correction.

and for our planet is so high. So on this Earth Day, it is time for us to lay a new foundation for economic growth by beginning a new era of energy exploration in America. That's why I'm here.

Now, the choice we face is not between saving our environment and saving our economy. The choice we face is between prosperity and decline. We can remain the world's leading importer of oil, or we can become the world's leading exporter of clean energy. We can allow climate change to wreak unnatural havoc across the landscape, or we can create jobs working to prevent its worst effects. We can hand over the jobs of the 21st century to our competitors, or we can confront what countries in Europe and Asia have already recognized as both a challenge and an opportunity. The nation that leads the world in creating new energy sources will be the nation that leads the 21st century global economy.

America can be that nation. America must be that nation. And while we seek new forms of fuel to power our homes and cars and businesses, we will rely on the same ingenuity, the same American spirit, that has always been a part of our American story.

Now, this will not be easy. There aren't any silver bullets. There's no magic energy source right now. Maybe some kid in a lab somewhere is figuring it out. Twenty years from now, there may be an entirely new energy source that we don't yet know about. But right now, there's no silver bullet. It's going to take a variety of energy sources, pursued through a variety of policies, to drastically reduce our dependence on oil and fossil fuels. As I've often said, in the short term, as we transition to renewable energy, we can and should increase our domestic production of oil and natural gas. We're not going to transform our economy overnight. We still need more oil; we still need more gas. If we've got some here in the United States that we can use, we should find it and do so in an environmentally sustainable way. We also need to find safer ways to use nuclear power and store nuclear waste.

But the bulk of our efforts must focus on unleashing a new, clean energy economy that will begin to reduce our dependence on foreign oil, will cut our carbon pollution by about 80 percent by 2050, and create millions of new jobs right here in America, right here in Newton.

My administration has already taken unprecedented action towards this goal. It's work that begins with the simplest, fastest, most effective way we have to make our economy cleaner, and that is to make our economy more energy efficient. California has shown that it can be done. While electricity consumption grew 50 percent in this country over the last three decades, in California, it remained flat.

Think about this. I want everybody to think about this. Over the last several decades, the rest of the country, we used 50 percent more energy; California remained flat, used the same amount, even though that they were growing just as fast as the rest of the country, because they were more energy efficient. They put in some good policy early on that assured that they weren't wasting energy. Now, if California can do it, then the whole country can do it. Iowa can do it.

Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, we've begun to modernize 75 percent of all Federal building space, which has the potential to reduce long-term energy costs just in Federal buildings by billions of dollars on behalf of taxpayers. We're providing grants to States to help weatherize hundreds of thousands of homes, which will save the families that benefit about $350 each year. That's like a $350 tax cut.

Consumers are also eligible as part of the Recovery Act for up to $1,500 in tax credits to purchase more efficient cooling and heating systems, insulation, and windows in order to reduce their energy bills. And I've issued a memorandum to the Department of Energy to implement more aggressive efficiency standards for common household appliances, like dishwashers and refrigerators. We actually have made so much progress, just on something as simple as refrigerators, that you have seen refrigerators today many times more efficient than they were back in 1974. We save huge amounts of energy, if we upgrade those appliances. Through this—through these steps, over the next three decades, we will save

twice the amount of energy produced by all the coal-fired power plants in America in any given year.

We're already seeing reports from across the country of how this is beginning to create jobs, because local governments and businesses rush to hire folks to do the work of building and installing these energy efficient products. And these steps will spur job creation and innovation as more Americans make purchases that place a premium on reducing energy consumption. Business across the country will join the competition, developing new products, seeking new consumers.

In the end, the sum total of choices made by consumers and companies in response to our recovery plan will mean less pollution in our air and water. It'll reduce costs for families and businesses—money in your pocket, and it will lower our overall reliance on fossil fuels, which disrupt our environment and endanger our children's future.

So that's step number one: energy efficiency. That's the low-hanging fruit. But energy efficiency can only take us part of the way. Even as we're conserving energy, we need to change the way we produce energy.

Today, America produces less than 3 percent of our electricity through renewable sources like wind and solar, less than 3 percent. Now, in comparison, Denmark produces almost 20 percent of their electricity through wind power. We pioneered solar technology, but we've fallen behind countries like Germany and Japan in generating it, even though we've got more sun than either country. I don't accept this is the way it has to be. When it comes to renewable energy, I don't think we should be followers, I think it's time for us to lead.

We are now poised to do exactly that. According to some estimates, last year, 40 percent of all new generating capacity in our country came from wind. In Iowa, you know what this means. This State is second only to Texas in installed wind capacity, which more than doubled last year alone. The result: Once shuttered factories are whirring back to life right here at Trinity. At TPI Composites, where more than 300 workers are manufacturing turbine blades, same thing. Elsewhere in this State and across America—in 2000, energy technology represented just one half of one percent of all venture capital investments. Today, it's more than 10 percent.

The recovery plan seeks to build on this progress and encourage even faster growth. We're providing incentives to double our Nation's capacity to generate renewable energy over the next few years, extending the production tax credit, providing loan guarantees, offering grants to spur investment in new sources of renewable fuel and electricity. My budget also invests $15 billion each year for 10 years to develop clean energy including wind power and solar power, geothermal energy, and clean coal technology.

And today I'm announcing that my administration is taking another historic step. Through the Department of Interior, we are establishing a program to authorize, for the very first time, the leasing of Federal waters for projects to generate electricity from wind, as well as from ocean currents and other renewable sources. And this will open the door to major investments in offshore clean energy. For example, there is enormous interest in wind projects off the coasts of New Jersey and Delaware, and today's announcement will enable these projects to move forward.

It's estimated that if we fully pursue our potential for wind energy on land and offshore, wind can generate as much as 20 percent of our electricity by 2030 and create a quarter-million jobs in the process, 250,000 jobs in the process, jobs that pay well and provide good benefits. It's a win-win: It's good for the environment; it's great for the economy.

Even as we pursue renewable energy from the wind and the Sun and other sources, we also need a smarter, stronger electricity grid—some of you have been hearing about this, this smart grid—a grid that can carry energy from one end of this country to the other. So when you guys are building these amazing towers and the turbines are going up and they're producing energy, we've got to make sure that energy produced in Iowa can get to Chicago, energy produced in North Dakota can get to Milwaukee. That's why we're making an $11

billion investment through the recovery plan to modernize the way we distribute electricity.

And as we're taking unprecedented steps to save energy and generate new kinds of energy for our homes and businesses, we need to do the same for our cars and trucks. Right now, two of America's iconic automakers are considering their future. They're facing difficult challenges—I'm talking about Chrysler and GM. But one thing we know is that for automakers to succeed in the future, these companies need to build the cars of the future, they can't build the cars of the past. Yet, for decades, fuel economy and fuel economy standards have stagnated, leaving American consumers vulnerable to the ebb and flow of gas prices. When gas prices spike up like they did last summer, suddenly the market for American cars plummets, because we build SUVs. That's it. It leaves the American economy ever more dependent on the supply of foreign oil.

We have to create the incentives for companies to develop the next generation of clean energy vehicles, and for Americans to drive them, particularly as the U.S. auto industry moves forward on a historic restructuring that can position it for a more prosperous future. And that's why my administration has begun to put in place higher fuel economy standards for the first time since the mid-1980s, so our cars will get better mileage, saving drivers money, spurring companies to develop more innovative products. The Recovery Act also includes $2 billion in competitive grants to develop the next generation of batteries for plug-in hybrids. We're planning to buy 17,600 American-made, fuel-efficient cars and trucks for the Government fleet. And today, Vice President Biden is announcing a Clean Cities grant program through the Recovery Act to help State and local governments purchase clean energy vehicles too.

We can clean up our environment and put people back to work in a strong U.S. auto industry, but we've got to have some imagination and we've got to be bold. We can't be looking backwards; we've got to look forward.

My budget's also making unprecedented investments in mass transit, high-speed rail, and in our highway system to reduce the congestion that wastes money and time and energy. We need to connect Des Moines to Chicago with high-speed rail, all across the Midwest. That way you don't have to take off your shoes when you want to go visit Chicago going through the airport.

My budget also invests in advanced biofuels and ethanol, which, as I've said, is an important transitional fuel to help us end our dependence on foreign oil while moving towards clean, homegrown sources of energy.

And while we're creating the incentives for companies to develop these technologies, we're also creating incentives for consumers to adapt to these new technologies. So the Recovery Act includes a new credit—new tax credit for up to $7,500 to encourage Americans to buy more fuel-efficient cars and trucks. So if you guys are in the market to buy a car or truck, check out that tax credit.

In addition, innovation depends on innovators doing the research and testing the ideas that might not pay off in the short run—some of them will be dead-ends, won't pay off at all—but when taken together, hold incredible potential over the long term. And that's why my recovery plan includes the largest investment in basic research funding in American history. And my budget includes a 10-year commitment to make the research and experimentation tax credit permanent. That's a tax credit that returns $2 to the economy for every dollar we spend. That young guy in the garage designing a new engine or a new battery, that computer scientist who's imagining a new way of thinking about energy, we need to fund them now, fund them early, because that's what America has always been about, technology and innovation.

And this is only the beginning. My administration will be pursuing comprehensive legislation to move towards energy independence and prevent the worst consequences of climate change, while creating the incentives to make clean energy the profitable kind of energy in America.

Now, there's been some debate about this whole climate change issue. But it's serious. It could be a problem. It could end up having an impact on farmers like Rich. If you're starting

to see temperatures grow—rise 1, 2, 3 percent, have a profound impact on our lives. And the fact is, we place limits on pollutants like sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide and other harmful emissions. But we haven't placed any limits on carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. It's what's called the carbon loophole.

Now, last week, in response to a mandate from the United States Supreme Court, the Environmental Protection Agency determined that carbon dioxide and other tailpipe emissions are harmful to the health and well-being of our people. So there's no question that we have to regulate carbon pollution in some way; the only question is how we do it.

I believe the best way to do it is through legislation that places a market-based cap on these kinds of emissions. And today key members of my administration are testifying in Congress on a bill that seeks to enact exactly this kind of market-based approach. My hope is that this will be the vehicle through which we put this policy in effect.

And here's how a market-based cap would work: We'd set a cap, a ceiling, on all the carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that our economy is allowed to produce in total, combining the emissions from cars and trucks, coal-fired power plants, energy-intensive industries, all sources.

And by setting an overall cap, carbon pollution becomes like a commodity. It places a value on a limited resource, and that is the ability to pollute. And to determine that value, just like any other traded commodity, we'd create a market where companies could buy and sell the right to produce a certain amount of carbon pollution. And in this way, every company can determine for itself whether it makes sense to spend the money to become cleaner or more efficient, or to spend the money on a certain amount of allowable pollution.

Over time, as the cap on greenhouse gases is lowered, the commodity becomes scarcer, and the price goes up. And year by year, companies and consumers would have greater incentive to invest in clean energy and energy efficiency as the price of the status quo becomes more expensive.

What this does is it makes wind power more economical, makes solar power more economical. Clean energy all becomes more economical. And by closing the carbon loophole through this kind of market-based cap, we can address in a systematic way all the facets of the energy crisis. We lower our dependence on foreign oil, we reduce our use of fossil fuels, we promote new industries right here in America. We set up the right incentives so that everybody is moving in the same direction towards energy independence.

And as we pursue solutions through the public and private sectors, we also need to remember that every American has a role to play. This is not just a job for government. You know, some of you may remember, during the campaign, when gas was real high, I suggested during the campaign that one small step Americans could take would be to keep their tires inflated. Do you remember that? Everybody teased me. They said, "Oh, look, look, that's Obama's energy policy." My opponent sent around tire gauges. But I tell you what, it turns out that saves you an awful lot of gas—money in your pocket. It also made sense for our energy use as a whole. If everybody kept their tires inflated, that would have a big dent. It would produce as much oil savings as we might be pumping in some of these offshore sites by drilling.

So we've got to get everybody involved in this process. I don't accept the conventional wisdom that suggests that the American people are unable or unwilling to participate in a national effort to transform the way we use energy. I don't believe that the only thing folks are capable of doing is just paying their taxes. I disagree. I think the American people are ready to be part of a mission. I believe that.

It's not just keeping your tires inflated. If each one of us replaced just one ordinary incandescent light bulb with one of those compact fluorescent light bulbs—you know, the squirrelly ones—that could save enough energy to light 3 million homes. Just one light bulb each, 3 million homes worth of energy savings. That's just one small step. So all of us are going to have to be involved in this process. And like I said, if you make the investment upfront, you, the individual consumer will save money in the long

term, and all of us collectively will be better off.

Now, this is also a global problem, so it's going to require a global coalition to solve it. If we've got problems with climate change, and the temperature rising all around the world, that knows no boundaries, and the decisions of any nation will affect every nation. So next week, I will be gathering leaders of major economies from all around the world to talk about how we can work together to address this energy crisis and this climate crisis.

Truth is the United States has been slow to participate in this kind of a process, working with other nations. But those days are over now. We are ready to engage, and we're asking other nations to join us in tackling this challenge together.

All of these steps we've taken in just the first 3 months, probably represents more progress than we've achieved in three decades on the energy front. We're beginning the difficult work of reducing our dependence on foreign oil. We're beginning to break the bonds, the grip, that fossil fuels has on us. We're beginning to create a new, clean energy economy, and the millions of jobs that will flow from it.

Now, there are those who still cling to the notion that we ought to just continue doing what we do; that we can't change—Americans like to use a lot of energy, that's just how we are; that government has neither the responsibility nor the reason to address our dependence on energy sources, even though they undermine our security and threaten our economy and endanger our planet.

And then there is this even more dangerous idea, the idea that there's nothing we can do about it: "Our politics is broken; our people are unwilling to make hard choices." So politicians decide: "Look, even though we know it's something that has to be done, we're just going to put it off." That's what happened for the last three, four, five decades. Everybody has known that we had to do something, but nobody wanted to actually go ahead and do it, because it's hard.

So the implication in this argument is that we've somehow lost something important, that perhaps because of the very prosperity we've built over the course of generations, that we've given up that fighting American spirit, that sense of optimism, that willingness to tackle tough challenges, that determination to see those challenges to the end, the notion that we've gotten soft somehow.

I reject that argument. I reject it because of what you're doing right here at Trinity, what's happening right here in Newton after folks have gone through hard times. I reject it because of what I've seen across this country, in all the eyes of the people that I've met, in the stories that I've heard, in the factories I've visited, in the places where I've seen the future being pieced together, test by test, trial by trial.

So it will not be easy. There will be bumps along the road. There will be costs for our Nation and for each of us as individuals. As I said before, there's no magic bullet, there's no perfect answer to our energy needs. All of us are going to have to use energy more wisely. But I know that we are ready and able to meet these challenges. All of us are beneficiaries of a daring and innovative past. Our parents, our grandparents, our great-grandparents adapted to much more difficult circumstances to deliver the prosperity that we enjoy today.

And I'm confident that we can be and will be the benefactors of a brighter future for our children and grandchildren. That can be our legacy, a legacy of vehicles powered by clean renewable energy traveling past newly opened factories, of industries employing millions of Americans in the work of protecting our planet, of an economy exporting the energy of the future instead of importing the energy of the past, of a nation once again leading the world to meet the challenges of our time.

That's our future. I hope you're willing to work with me to get there. Thank you very much. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:52 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Richard Mulbrook, maintenance manager, Trinity Structural Towers, Inc., who introduced the President; and Sen. John McCain, 2008 Republican Presidential candidate.

Remarks at the Holocaust Days of Remembrance Ceremony
April 23, 2009

Thank you. Please be seated. Thank you very much. To Sara Bloomfield, for the wonderful introduction and the outstanding work that she's doing; to Fred Zeidman; Joel Geiderman; Mr. Wiesel, thank you for your wisdom and your witness; Speaker Nancy Pelosi; Senator Dick Durbin; Members of Congress; our good friend the Ambassador of Israel; members of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council; and most importantly, the survivors and rescuers and their families who are here today: It is a great honor for me to be here, and I'm grateful that I have the opportunity to address you briefly.

We gather today to mourn the loss of so many lives and celebrate those who saved them, honor those who survived and contemplate the obligations of the living. It is the grimmest of ironies that one of the most savage, barbaric acts of evil in history began in one of the most modernized societies of its time, where so many markers of human progress became tools of human depravity: science that can heal used to kill; education that can enlighten used to rationalize away basic moral impulses; the bureaucracy that sustains modern life used as the machinery of mass death, a ruthless, chillingly efficient system where many were responsible for the killing, but few got actual blood on their hands.

While the uniqueness of the Holocaust in scope and in method is truly astounding, the Holocaust was driven by many of the same forces that have fueled atrocities throughout history: the scapegoating that leads to hatred and blinds us to our common humanity; the justifications that replace conscience and allow cruelty to spread; the willingness of those who are neither perpetrators nor victims to accept the assigned role of bystander, believing the lie that good people are ever powerless or alone, the fiction that we do not have a choice.

But while we are here today to bear witness to the human capacity to destroy, we are also here to pay tribute to the human impulse to save. In the moral accounting of the Holocaust, as we reckon with numbers like 6 million, as we recall the horror of numbers etched into arms, we also factor in numbers like these: 7,200, the number of Danish Jews ferried to safety, many of whom later returned home to find the neighbors who rescued them had also faithfully tended their homes and businesses and belongings while they were gone.

We remember the number five, the five righteous men and women who join us today from Poland. We are awed by your acts of courage and conscience. And your presence today compels each of us to ask ourselves whether we would have done what you did. We can only hope that the answer is yes.

We also remember the number 5,000, the number of Jews rescued by the villagers of Le Chambon, France—one life saved for each of its 5,000 residents. Not a single Jew who came there was turned away or turned in. But it was not until decades later that the villagers spoke of what they had done, and even then, only reluctantly. The author of a book on the rescue found that those he interviewed were baffled by his interest. "How could you call us 'good'?" they said. "We were doing what had to be done."

That is the question of the righteous, those who would do extraordinary good at extraordinary risk not for affirmation or acclaim or to advance their own interests, but because it is what must be done. They remind us that no one is born a savior or a murderer; these are choices we each have the power to make. They teach us that no one can make us into bystanders without our consent, and that we are never truly alone, that if we have the courage to heed that still, small voice within us, we can form a *minyan* for righteousness that can span a village, even a nation.

Their legacy is our inheritance. And the question is, how do we honor and preserve it? How do we ensure that "never again" isn't an empty slogan or merely an aspiration, but also a call to action? I believe we start by doing what we are doing today, by bearing witness, by fighting the silence that is evil's greatest co-conspirator.

In the face of horrors that defy comprehension, the impulse to silence is understandable. My own great uncle returned from his service in World War II in a state of shock, saying little, alone with painful memories that would not leave his head. He went up into the attic, according to the stories that I've heard, and wouldn't come down for 6 months. He was one of the liberators, someone who at a very tender age had seen the unimaginable. And so some of—the liberators who are here today honor us with their presence—all of whom we honor for their extraordinary service. My great uncle was part of the 89th Infantry Division, the first Americans to reach a Nazi concentration camp. And they liberated Ohrdruf, part of Buchenwald, where tens of thousands had perished.

The story goes that when the Americans marched in, they discovered the starving survivors and the piles of dead bodies. And General Eisenhower made a decision. He ordered Germans from the nearby town to tour the camp, so they could see what had been done in their name. And he ordered American troops to tour the camp, so they could see the evil they were fighting against. Then he invited Congressmen and journalists to bear witness. And he ordered that photographs and films be made. Some of us have seen those same images, whether in the Holocaust Museum or when I visited Yad Vashem, and they never leave you. Eisenhower said that he wanted "to be in a position to give firsthand evidence of these things, if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to propaganda."

Eisenhower understood the danger of silence. He understood that if no one knew what had happened that would be yet another atrocity, and it would be the perpetrators' ultimate triumph. What Eisenhower did to record these crimes for history is what we are doing here today. That's what Elie Wiesel and the survivors we honor here do by fighting to make their memories part of our collective memory. That's what the Holocaust Museum does every day on our National Mall, the place where we display for the world our triumphs and failures and the lessons we've learned from our history. It's the very opposite of silence.

But we must also remember that bearing witness is not the end of our obligation; it's just the beginning. We know that evil has yet to run its course on Earth. We've seen it in this century in the mass graves and the ashes of villages burned to the ground and children used as soldiers and rape used as a weapon of war. To this day, there are those who insist the Holocaust never happened, who perpetrate every form of intolerance—racism and anti-Semitism, homophobia, xenophobia, sexism, and more—hatred that degrades its victim and diminishes us all.

Today, and every day, we have an opportunity, as well as an obligation, to confront these scourges, to fight the impulse to turn the channel when we see images that disturb us, or wrap ourselves in the false comfort that others' sufferings are not our own. Instead we have the opportunity to make a habit of empathy, to recognize ourselves in each other, to commit ourselves to resisting injustice and intolerance and indifference in whatever forms they may take, whether confronting those who tell lies about history or doing everything we can to prevent and end atrocities like those that took place in Rwanda, those taking place in Darfur. That is my commitment as President. I hope that is yours as well.

It will not be easy. At times, fulfilling these obligations require self-reflection. But in the final analysis, I believe history gives us cause for hope rather than despair, the hope of a chosen people who have overcome oppression since the days of Exodus, of the nation of Israel rising from the destruction of the Holocaust, of the strong and enduring bonds between our nations.

It is the hope, too, of those who not only survived, but chose to live, teaching us the meaning of courage and resilience and dignity. I'm thinking today of a study conducted after the war that found that Holocaust survivors living in America actually had a higher birthrate than American Jews. What a stunning act of faith, to bring a child in a world that has shown you so much cruelty, to believe that no

matter what you have endured or how much you have lost, in the end, you have a duty to life.

We find cause for hope, as well, in Protestant and Catholic children attending school together in Northern Ireland, in Hutus and Tutsis living side by side, forgiving neighbors who have done the unforgivable, in a movement to save Darfur that has thousands of high school and college chapters in 25 countries and brought 70,000 people to the Washington Mall, people of every age and faith and background and race united in common cause with suffering brothers and sisters halfway around the world.

Those numbers can be our future; our fellow citizens of the world showing us how to make the journey from oppression to survival, from witness to resistance, and, ultimately, to reconciliation. That is what we mean when we say "never again."

So today, during this season when we celebrate liberation, resurrection, and the possibility of redemption, may each of us renew our resolve to do what must be done. And may we strive each day, both individually and as a nation, to be among the righteous.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:04 p.m. at the U.S. Capitol. In his remarks, he referred to Sara J. Bloomfield, director, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum; Fred S. Zeidman, chairman, and Joel M. Geiderman, vice chairman, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council; Nobel Prize winner, author, and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel; and Israel's Ambassador to the U.S. Sallai Meridor. He also referred to his great uncle Charles Payne.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Credit Card Industry Representatives and an Exchange With Reporters
April 23, 2009

The President. Okay. Well, I just had a constructive meeting with the heads of many of the leading credit card issuers here in the country. Obviously, we're at a time where issues of credit and how businesses and families are able to finance everything from a car loan to a student loan to just paying their bills every day is on a lot of people's minds. And Secretary Geithner and our economic team has worked diligently to try to restore confidence in the credit markets, to assure that the nonbank financial sector is stronger, to ensure that banks have the capital they need, and that that money is getting out the door to the ultimate end user, the American businessperson and individual.

We're still seeing some problems, although we think that we've begun to make progress. One of the areas, as we move forward and look at financial regulation—how do we create a framework where this kind of crisis doesn't happen again, and how do we create a sustainable model for economic growth and debt that is not based on bubbles and overleveraging on the part of businesses and consumers—is the issue of credit cards and how they're used and how we can create a more stable, more effective, more consumer-friendly system.

We had a discussion with some of the top issuers here, and what I communicated to them is that I think credit cards are an important convenience for a lot of people. They are a source of unsecured debt for a lot of individuals and small businesses who are creating jobs; a lot of startups may use credit cards for that purpose. We think that's important, and so we want to preserve the credit card market. But we also want to do so in a way that eliminates some of the abuses and some of the problems that a lot of people are familiar with: people finding themselves starting off with a low rate, and next thing they know, their interest rates have doubled; fees that they didn't know about but are suddenly tacked on to their bills; a whole lack of clarity and transparency in terms of the terms and conditions of their credit cards.

And so there's going to be action in Congress. Our administration is going to be pushing for reform in this area. We think it's important that we get input from the credit card issuers as we shape this reform, but there—and I'm going

to leave it up to my economic team to work with Congress to evaluate all the various proposals and to get some very definitive language in place. There are going to be some core principles, though, that I want to adhere to, and I mentioned these to all the credit card issuers involved.

First of all, I think that there has to be strong and reliable protections for consumers, protections that ban unfair rate increases and forbid abusive fees and penalties. The days of any time, any reason rate hikes and late fee traps have to end.

Number two, all the forms and statements that credit card companies send out have to be written in plain language and be in plain sight. No more fine print, no more confusing terms and conditions. We want clarity and transparency from here on out.

Number three, we have to make sure that people can comparison shop when it comes to credit cards without being afraid that they're going to be taken advantage of. So we believe that it's important to require firms to make all their contract terms easily accessible online in a fashion that allows people to shop for the best deal for their needs.

Not every consumer is going to have the same needs. And some may want to take on a higher interest rate because it provides them more convenience or it provides them with a higher credit line. But we want to make sure that they can make those comparisons themselves easily. And we think that one of the things that needs to be explored is the possibility that every credit card issuer has to issue a plain vanilla, easy to understand, simplest terms possible credit card as a default credit card that the average user can feel comfortable with.

Finally, we think we need more accountability in the system. And that means more effective oversight and more effective enforcement so that people who are issuing credit cards but violate law, they will feel the full weight of the law.

So we are confident that we can arrive at something that is commonsensical, something that allows the industry to continue to provide loans and to run a stable business model that's not dependent on bubbles, that's not dependent on people getting overextended or finding themselves in over their heads. I trust that those in the industry who want to act responsibly will engage with us in a constructive fashion and that we're going to be able to get this done in short order.

All right. Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

Lines of Credit

Q. Is there a balance between protecting consumers and letting the credit card companies have revenue here?

The President. We think that it's been out of balance. And so we think we need to create a new equilibrium where credit is flowing, those who are issuing credit are able to make a reasonable profit, but they're doing so in a way that is responsible and consumers are not finding themselves in a bad situation that they didn't anticipate.

All right. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:52 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner.

Remarks Honoring the 2008 NCAA Football Champion University of Florida Gators

April 23, 2009

The President. All right. Well, this is not "The Swamp" that you're used to, but DC is built on a swamp, so welcome to Washington, DC, and welcome back to the White House. I know at least that the—some of the upperclassmen have been here before. Congratulations on the national champions—being the national champions for the second time in 3

years. That's outstanding, and they deserve a big round of applause, so give them a—[*applause*].

I want to congratulate everybody who makes this program run, from the assistants to the trainers, from the students to the ticket takers, all of you should be very, very proud. And I should mention, by the way, there are a whole bunch of Members of Congress who are here from Florida who are very proud. And so—and they brag about you in Congress all the time.

I want to thank Coach Urban Meyer, his wife Shelley, and their family for being here. I was just mentioning as we were walking down, there's something about Coach Meyer's teams; they just have a lot of heart. And that's a reflection of coaching values that talk about character and integrity and not just winning. And so we are very appreciative of the work that you've done, Coach. That's also why it's so easy to tell that these guys have operated like one big family. And that comes across on and off the field.

I do have to give a special shout-out to Marcus Gilbert. Where's Marcus? [*Laughter*] There he is. Marcus—I've got a soft spot for this guy, because his dad Jeff was the first Secret Service agent on my detail almost 2 years ago. He was with me for most of the campaign. He is a great friend of mine, and there he is back there. So that's Marcus's pop right here. We always tried to figure out how Marcus got so big—[*laughter*]—because Jeff is not that big, and his wife is even smaller.

People forget now, but this team was not ranked number one until the end of the season. That's perseverance. And that's thanks to the tone the coach sets. He trains these guys for "competitive excellence," as he calls it, on and off the field. And in sports, as in life, your number may be called just once—oh, whose phone is that? [*Laughter*] Is that one of the player's phones? Fess up. [*Laughter*] All right. That's all right. Coach is going to talk to you after—[*laughter*]—about not turning off your phone.

In sports as in life—I was going to say your number may just be called once, but I didn't mean it literally. [*Laughter*] And Coach makes sure that you're—they're ready when that happens.

I understand that a lot of times reporters ask Coach Meyer, "What did you say to the team at halftime?" But what I've heard is he doesn't usually have to say too much because the leaders of this team step up and say what needs to be said. So there are guys like Percy and Brandon and Louis Murphy, and I understand there are a couple of comedians here, the 300-pound Pouncey twins. Where are they? [*Laughter*] Where are they at? Right there? [*Laughter*] All right. And then of course there's the quarterback. Where's Tebow at?

Timothy Tebow. Right here.

The President. There he is, over there—Heisman Trophy winner. That's what I'm talking about. [*Laughter*] Everybody is going to get a handshake afterwards, just relax. [*Laughter*] Tim is an inspiration to so many, a guy whose true strength comes not from the gym, but from his faith. He says he puts faith, family, and academics above football. And that's incredible when you think about what he's done on the field: first sophomore ever to win the Heisman Trophy, in a season in which he personally scored more touchdowns than 87 entire teams in Division I–A football.

I remember watching the upset when you guys lost to Ole Miss. I was actually doing a debate in Ole Miss right before the game. And I remember Tim apologizing, watching him on TV apologizing to Gators fans and laying down a challenge to himself, making a commitment, a promise that in fact they were going to push as hard as he—they could and he was going to personally take it upon himself to make sure that you never see a team play harder than we will the rest of the season.

You know, that's the kind of leadership that you want to see from all our young people, taking responsibility, challenging yourself and others, rising to the moment. You didn't promise that the Gators would win every game the rest of the way, but it's a testament to his leadership that they did, because he said we'll always play hard.

Now, he'll be the first to tell you he didn't do any of this alone. Everybody stepped up. So there are guys like wide receiver David Nelson—where's David? There we go—[*laughter*]—who went into Coach Meyer's office after

Tim's promise and said he wouldn't do—he would do anything for this team, then upped his play all year, ended up catching the clinching touchdown.

What Coach Meyer and all these guys also understand is, being a champion doesn't stop when you leave the field. They've committed themselves to 400 hours each year in service to others, mentoring at-risk youth, showing them that—those youth that if they put their hearts into it, they too can succeed. They play with children in pediatric units, help kids learn to read, promote fitness and physical activity, and so much more.

And all of this makes the Gainesville community that much stronger, and it makes Florida that much stronger, it makes our country stronger. And I know that the guys behind me get a lot of it—a lot out of it in return.

Now, last point I would make. I don't want to stir up controversy. You guys are the national champions. I'm not backing off the fact we need a playoff system. But I have every confidence that you guys could have beat anybody else. And so we'll see how that plays itself out. I noticed they got all quiet after that. [*Laughter*] But you know, I'm one of those politicians, I don't just tell you what you want to hear, I tell you what you need to hear. [*Laughter*]

I know final exams start this weekend, so I don't want to keep you any longer. You guys are going to have to hit the books. But I just want to say good luck to those who are going to be back next year, to those of you who are moving on the wider stage. Congratulations to all of you for a national championship that I know that you are extremely proud of. And I look forward to continuing to enjoy watching all of you next fall.

So thank you very much, everybody. Give it up for the Gators.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:50 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Percy Harvin, wide receiver, Brandon Spikes, linebacker, Louis Murphy, wide receiver, Maurkice and Michael Pouncey, offensive linemen, and Tim Tebow, quarterback, University of Florida football team.

Remarks on Education Reform
April 24, 2009

Thank you. That was excellent. We might have to run her for something some day. That was terrific. Thank you, Stephanie. I want to also introduce Yvonne Thomas, who's Stephanie's proud mother. And we appreciate everything that you've done. And Stephanie's father Albert is around here as well.

There are few things as fundamental to the American Dream or as essential for America's success as a good education. This has never been more true than it is today. At a time when our children are competing with kids in China and India, the best job qualification you can have is a college degree or advanced training. If you do have that kind of education, then you're well prepared for the future, because half of the fastest growing jobs in America require a Bachelor's degree or more. And if you don't have a college degree, you're more than twice as likely to be unemployed as somebody who does. So the stakes could not be higher for young people like Stephanie.

And yet, in a paradox of American life, at the very moment it's never been more important to have a quality higher education, the cost of that kind of education has never been higher. Over the past few decades, the cost of tuition at private colleges has more than doubled, while costs at public institutions have nearly tripled. Compounding the problem, tuition has grown ten times faster than a typical family's income, putting new pressure on families that are already strained and pricing far too many students out of college altogether. Yet we have a student loan system where we're giving lenders billions of dollars in wasteful subsidies that could be used to make college more affordable for all Americans.

This trend, a trend where a quality higher education slips out of reach for ordinary Americans, threatens the dream of

opportunity that America's promised to all its citizens. It threatens to widen the gap between the haves and the have-nots. And it threatens to undercut America's competitiveness, because America cannot lead in the 21st century unless we have the best educated, most competitive workforce in the world. And that's the kind of workforce—and the kind of citizenry—to which we should be committed.

And that's why we have taken and proposed a number of sweeping steps over our first few months in office, steps that amount to the most significant efforts to open the doors of college to middleclass Americans since the GI bill. Millions of working families are now eligible for a $2,500 annual tax credit that will help them pay the cost of tuition, a tax credit that will cover the full cost of tuition at most of the 2-year community colleges that are some of the great and undervalued assets of our education system.

We're also bringing much needed reform to the Pell grants that roughly 30 percent of students rely on to put themselves through college. Today's Pell grants cover less than half as much tuition at a 4-year public institution as they did a few decades ago. And that's why we are adding $500 to the grants for this academic year and raising the maximum Pell grant to $5,550 next year, easing the financial burden on students and families.

And we are also changing the way the value of a Pell grant is determined. Today, that value is set by Congress on an annual basis, making it vulnerable to Washington politics. What we are doing is pegging Pell grants to a fixed rate above inflation so that these grants don't cover less and less as families' costs go up and up. And this will help prevent a projected shortfall in Pell grant funding in a few years that could rob many of our poorest students of their dream of attending college. It will help ensure that Pell grants are a source of funding that students can count on each and every year.

Now, while our Nation has a responsibility to make college more affordable, colleges and universities have a responsibility to control spiraling costs. And that will require hard choices about where to save and where to spend. So I challenge State college and university leaders to put affordability front and center as they chart a path forward. I challenge them to follow the example of the University of Maryland, where they're streamlining administrative costs, cutting energy costs, using faculty more effectively, making it possible for them to freeze tuition for students and for families.

At the same time, we're also working to modernize and expand the Perkins Loan Program by changing a system where colleges are rewarded for raising tuition, and instead, rewarding them for making college more affordable.

Now just as we've opened the doors of college to every American, we also have to ensure that more students can walk through them. And that's why I've challenged every American to commit to at least 1 year of higher education or advanced training, because by the end of the next decade, I want to see America have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. We used to have that; we no longer do. We are going to get that lead back.

And to help us achieve that goal, we are investing $2.5 billion to identify and support innovative initiatives that have a record of success in boosting enrollment and graduation rates, initiatives like the IBEST program in Washington State that combines basic and career-skills classes to ensure that students not only complete college, but are competitive in the workforce from the moment they graduate.

And to help cover the cost of all this, we're going to eliminate waste, reduce inefficiency, and cut what we don't need to pay for what we do. And that includes reforming our student loan system, so that it better serves the people it's supposed to serve—our students.

Right now, there are two main kinds of Federal loans. First, there are direct loans. These are loans where tax dollars go directly to help students pay for tuition, not to pad the profits of private lenders. The other kinds of loans are Federal Family Education Loans. These loans, known as FFEL loans, make up the majority of all college loans. Under the FFEL program, lenders get a big Government subsidy with every loan they make. And these loans are then guaranteed with taxpayer money, which means that if a student defaults, a lender can get back almost all of its money from our Government.

And there's only one real difference between direct loans and private FFEL loans. It's that under the FFEL program, taxpayers are paying banks a premium to act as middlemen, a premium that costs the American people billions of dollars each year. Well, that's a premium we cannot afford, not when we could be reinvesting that same money in our students, in our economy, and in our country.

And that's why I've called for ending the FFEL program and shifting entirely over to direct loans. It's a step that even a conservative estimate predicts will save tens of billions of tax dollars over the next 10 years. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the money we could save by cutting out the middleman would pay for 95 percent of our plan to guarantee growing Pell grants. This would help ensure that every American everywhere in this country can outcompete any worker anywhere in the world.

In the end, this is not about growing the size of Government or relying on the free market, because it's not a free market when we have a student loan system that's rigged to reward private lenders without any risk. It's about whether we want to give tens of billions of tax dollars to special interests or whether we want to make college more affordable for 8½ million more students. I think most of us would agree on what the right answer is.

Now, some of you have probably seen how this proposal was greeted by the special interests. The banks and the lenders who have reaped a windfall from these subsidies have mobilized an army of lobbyists to try to keep things the way they are. They are gearing up for battle; so am I. They will fight for their special interests. I will fight for Stephanie and other American students and their families. And for those who care about America's future, this is a battle we can't afford to lose.

So I am looking forward to having this debate in the days and weeks ahead. And I am confident that if all of us here in Washington do what's in the best interests of the people we represent and reinvest not only in opening the doors of college, but making sure students can walk through them, then we will help deliver the change that the American people sent us here to make. We will help Americans fulfill their promise as individuals, and we will help America fulfill its promise as a nation.

So thank you very much. And thank you, Stephanie, and thank you, Stephanie's mom.

All right. Thanks, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:46 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Stephanie Stevenson, student, University of Maryland, who introduced the President.

Statement on World Malaria Day
April 24, 2009

The United States stands with our global partners and people around the world to reaffirm our commitment to make the U.S. a leader in ending deaths from malaria by 2015. This begins with ending malaria as a major public health threat in Africa, where it kills nearly 1 million people each year and overwhelms public health systems. It is time to redouble our efforts to rid the world of a disease that does not have to take lives.

Together, we have made great strides in addressing this preventable and treatable disease. Across Africa, children and their families are sleeping under bed nets, local groups are working with pregnant women and mothers so that antimalarial drugs are available for them and for their sick children. In schools and villages, community centers and places of worship, clinics and hospitals, optimism is growing that we can and we will succeed in our ambitious goals.

Together, we can build on this progress against malaria and address a broad range of global health threats by investing in health systems and continuing our work with partners to

deliver highly effective prevention and treatment measures.

In Africa, where the disease burden is the greatest, many countries are making dramatic gains in reducing the terrible burden of malaria, particularly for the benefit of those most vulnerable, so that malaria is no longer an intractable fact of life. Today I recommit to work with our partners in this fight.

Statement on Armenian Remembrance Day
April 24, 2009

Ninety four years ago, one of the great atrocities of the 20th century began. Each year, we pause to remember the 1.5 million Armenians who were subsequently massacred or marched to their death in the final days of the Ottoman Empire. The *Meds Yeghern* must live on in our memories, just as it lives on in the hearts of the Armenian people.

History, unresolved, can be a heavy weight. Just as the terrible events of 1915 remind us of the dark prospect of man's inhumanity to man, reckoning with the past holds out the powerful promise of reconciliation. I have consistently stated my own view of what occurred in 1915, and my view of that history has not changed. My interest remains the achievement of a full, frank, and just acknowledgment of the facts.

The best way to advance that goal right now is for the Armenian and Turkish people to address the facts of the past as a part of their efforts to move forward. I strongly support efforts by the Turkish and Armenian people to work through this painful history in a way that is honest, open, and constructive. To that end, there has been courageous and important dialog among Armenians and Turks, and within Turkey itself. I also strongly support the efforts by Turkey and Armenia to normalize their bilateral relations. Under Swiss auspices, the two governments have agreed on a framework and roadmap for normalization. I commend this progress and urge them to fulfill its promise.

Together, Armenia and Turkey can forge a relationship that is peaceful, productive, and prosperous. And together, the Armenian and Turkish people will be stronger as they acknowledge their common history and recognize their common humanity.

Nothing can bring back those who were lost in the *Meds Yeghern*. But the contributions that Armenians have made over the last 94 years stand as a testament to the talent, dynamism, and resilience of the Armenian people and as the ultimate rebuke to those who tried to destroy them. The United States of America is a far richer country because of the many Americans of Armenian descent who have contributed to our society, many of whom immigrated to this country in the aftermath of 1915. Today I stand with them and with Armenians everywhere with a sense of friendship, solidarity, and deep respect.

Statement on the Election of Matthew S. "Scott" Murphy to the United States House of Representatives
April 24, 2009

I want to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Congressman-elect Scott Murphy for his victory in New York's 20th Congressional District. With this hard-fought win, Scott has shown he is willing to fight the tough battles on behalf of the people in his district.

As a candidate, Scott courageously championed the economic plans we need to lift our Nation and put it on a better path, and he will continue to do so in Congress. With his proven record of creating high-paying jobs and standing up for upstate New York, Scott will bring to the Nation's Capitol the change New Yorkers need.

The President's Weekly Address
April 25, 2009

Good morning. Over the last 3 months, my administration has taken aggressive action to confront a historic economic crisis. As we do everything that we can to create jobs and get our economy moving, we're also building a new foundation for lasting prosperity, a foundation that invests in quality education, lowers health care costs, and develops new sources of energy powered by new jobs and industries.

One of the pillars of that foundation must be fiscal discipline. We came into office facing a budget deficit of $1.3 trillion for this year alone, and the cost of confronting our economic crisis is high. But we can't settle for a future of rising deficits and debt that our children can't pay. All across America, families are tightening their belts and making hard choices. Now, Washington must show that same sense of responsibility. That's why we've identified $2 trillion in deficit reductions over the next decade, while taking on the special interest spending that doesn't advance the peoples' interests.

But we must also recognize that we cannot meet the challenges of today with old habits and stale thinking. So much of our Government was built to deal with different challenges from a different era. Too often, the result is wasteful spending, bloated programs, and inefficient results. It's time to fundamentally change the way that we do business in Washington. To help build a new foundation for the 21st century, we need to reform our Government so that it is more efficient, more transparent, and more creative. That will demand new thinking and a new sense of responsibility for every dollar that is spent.

Earlier this week, I held my first Cabinet meeting and sent a clear message: Cut what doesn't work. Already, we've identified substantial savings. And in the days and weeks ahead, we will continue going through the budget line by line, and we'll identify more than 100 programs that will be cut or eliminated.

But we can't stop there. We need to go further, and we need an all-hands-on-deck approach to reforming Government. That's why I'm announcing several steps that my administration will take in the weeks ahead to restore fiscal discipline while making our Government work better.

First, we need to adhere to the basic principle that new tax or entitlement policies should be paid for. This principle, known as pay-go, helped transform large deficits into surpluses in the 1990s. Now we must restore that sense of fiscal discipline. And that's why I'm calling for Congress to pass pay-go legislation like a bill that will be introduced by Congressman Baron Hill, so that Government acts the same way any responsible family does in setting its budget.

Second, we'll create new incentives to reduce wasteful spending and to invest in what works. We don't want agencies to protect

bloated budgets; we want them to promote effective programs. So the idea is simple: Agencies that identify savings will get to keep a portion of those savings to invest in programs that work. The result will be a smaller budget and a more effective Government.

Third, we'll look for ideas from the bottom up. After all, Americans across the country know that the best ideas often come from workers, not just management. And that's why we'll establish a process through which every Government worker can submit their ideas for how their agency can save money and perform better. We'll put the suggestions that work into practice. And later this year, I will meet with those who come up with the best ideas to hear firsthand about how they would make your Government more efficient and effective.

And finally, we will reach beyond the halls of Government. Many businesses have innovative ways of using technology to save money, and many experts have new ideas to make Government work more efficiently. Government can, and must, learn from them. So later this year, we will host a forum on reforming Government for the 21st century, so that we're also guided by voices that come from outside of Washington.

We can't sustain deficits that mortgage our children's future, nor tolerate wasteful inefficiency. Government has a responsibility to spend the peoples' money wisely and to serve the people effectively. I will work every single day that I am President to live up to that responsibility and to transform our Government so that it is held to a higher standard of performance on behalf of the American people.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5:15 p.m. on April 24 in the Blue Room at the White House for broadcast on April 25. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 24 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on April 25.

Remarks at the National Academy of Sciences
April 27, 2009

Well, thank you so much for the wonderful welcome. To President Cicerone, thank you very much for your leadership and for hosting us today. To John Holdren, thanks, John, for the outstanding work that you are doing.

I was just informed backstage that Ralph and John both are 1965 graduates of MIT, same class. And so I'm not sure this is the perfectly prescribed scientific method, but they're sort of a control group—[*laughter*]—who ages faster: The President's science adviser or the president of the academy? [*Laughter*] And we'll check in, in a couple of years. But it is wonderful to see them.

To all of you, to my Cabinet Secretaries and team who are here, thank you. It is a great privilege to address the distinguished members of the National Academy of Sciences, as well as the leaders of the National Academy of Engineering and the Institute of Medicine who've gathered here this morning.

And I'd like to begin today with a story of a previous visitor who also addressed this august body. In April of 1921, Albert Einstein visited the United States for the first time. And his international credibility was growing as scientists around the world began to understand and accept the vast implications of his theories of special and general relativity. And he attended this annual meeting, and after sitting through a series of long speeches by others, he reportedly said, "I have just got a new theory of eternity." [*Laughter*] So I will do my best to heed this cautionary tale. [*Laughter*]

The very founding of this institution stands as a testament to the restless curiosity, the boundless hope so essential not just to the scientific enterprise, but to this experiment we call America. A few months after a devastating defeat at Fredericksburg, before Gettysburg would be won, before Richmond would fall, before the fate of the Union would be at all certain, President Abraham Lincoln signed into law an act creating the National Academy of Sciences, in the midst of civil war.

Lincoln refused to accept that our Nation's sole purpose was mere survival. He created this academy, founded the land-grant colleges, and began the work of the transcontinental railroad, believing that we must add, and I quote, "the fuel of interest to the fire of genius in the discovery of new and useful things."

This is America's story. Even in the hardest times, against the toughest odds, we've never given in to pessimism; we've never surrendered our fates to chance; we have endured; we have worked hard; we sought out new frontiers.

Today, of course, we face more complex challenges than we have ever faced before: a medical system that holds the promise of unlocking new cures and treatments, attached to a health care system that holds the potential for bankruptcy to families and businesses; a system of energy that powers our economy, but simultaneously endangers our planet; threats to our security that seek to exploit the very interconnectedness and openness so essential to our prosperity; and challenges in a global marketplace which links the derivative trader on Wall Street to the homeowner on Main Street, the office worker in America to the factory worker in China, a marketplace in which we all share in opportunity, but also in crisis.

At such a difficult moment, there are those who say we cannot afford to invest in science, that support for research is somehow a luxury at moments defined by necessities. I fundamentally disagree. Science is more essential for our prosperity, our security, our health, our environment, and our quality of life than it has ever been before.

And if there was ever a day that reminded us of our shared stake in science and research, it's today. We are closely monitoring the emerging cases of swine flu in the United States. And this is obviously a cause for concern and requires a heightened state of alert. But it's not a cause for alarm. The Department of Health and Human Services has declared a public health emergency as a precautionary tool to ensure that we have the resources we need at our disposal to respond quickly and effectively. And I'm getting regular updates on the situation from the responsible agencies. And the Department of Health and Human Services as well as the Centers for Disease Control will be offering regular updates to the American people. And Secretary Napolitano will be offering regular updates to the American people, as well, so that they know what steps are being taken and what steps they may need to take.

But one thing is clear: Our capacity to deal with a public health challenge of this sort rests heavily on the work of our scientific and medical community. And this is one more example of why we can't allow our Nation to fall behind.

Unfortunately, that's exactly what's happened. Federal funding in the physical sciences as a portion of our gross domestic product has fallen by nearly half over the past quarter century. Time and again we've allowed the research and experimentation tax credit, which helps businesses grow and innovate, to lapse.

Our schools continue to trail other developed countries and, in some cases, developing countries. Our students are outperformed in math and science by their peers in Singapore, Japan, England, the Netherlands, Hong Kong, and Korea, among others. Another assessment shows American 15-year-olds ranked 25th in math and 21st in science when compared to nations around the world. And we have watched as scientific integrity has been undermined and scientific research politicized in an effort to advance predetermined ideological agendas.

We know that our country is better than this. A half century ago, this Nation made a commitment to lead the world in scientific and technological innovation; to invest in education, in research, in engineering; to set a goal of reaching space and engaging every citizen in that historic mission. That was the high water mark of America's investment in research and development. And since then our investments have steadily declined as a share of our national income. As a result, other countries are now beginning to pull ahead in the pursuit of this generation's great discoveries.

Now, I believe it is not in our character, the American character, to follow; it's our

character to lead. And it is time for us to lead once again. So I am here today to set this goal: We will devote more than 3 percent of our GDP to research and development. We will not just meet, but we will exceed the level achieved at the height of the space race, through policies that invest in basic and applied research, create new incentives for private innovation, promote breakthroughs in energy and medicine, and improve education in math and science.

This represents the largest commitment to scientific research and innovation in American history. Just think what this will allow us to accomplish: solar cells as cheap as paint; green buildings that produce all the energy they consume; learning software as effective as a personal tutor; prosthetics so advanced that you could play the piano again; an expansion of the frontiers of human knowledge about ourselves and world the around us. We can do this.

The pursuit of discovery half a century ago fueled our prosperity and our success as a nation in the half century that followed. The commitment I am making today will fuel our success for another 50 years. That's how we will ensure that our children and their children will look back on this generation's work as that which defined the progress and delivered the prosperity of the 21st century.

This work begins with a historic commitment to basic science and applied research, from the labs of renowned universities to the proving grounds of innovative companies. Through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, and with the support of Congress, my administration is already providing the largest single boost to investment in basic research in American history. That's already happened.

This is important right now, as public and private colleges and universities across the country reckon with shrinking endowments and tightening budgets. But this is also incredibly important for our future. As Vannevar Bush, who served as scientific adviser to President Franklin Roosevelt, famously said: "Basic scientific research is scientific capital."

The fact is an investigation into a particular physical, chemical, or biological process might not pay off for a year, or a decade, or at all. And when it does, the rewards are often broadly shared, enjoyed by those who bore its costs but also by those who did not. And that's why the private sector generally under-invests in basic science, and why the public sector must invest in this kind of research, because while the risks may be large, so are the rewards for our economy and our society.

No one can predict what new applications will be born of basic research: new treatments in our hospitals, or new sources of efficient energy; new building materials; new kinds of crops more resistant to heat and to drought. It was basic research in the photoelectric field—in the photoelectric effect that would one day lead to solar panels. It was basic research in physics that would eventually produce the CAT scan. The calculations of today's GPS satellites are based on the equations that Einstein put to paper more than a century ago.

In addition to the investments in the Recovery Act, the budget I've proposed, and versions have now passed both the House and the Senate, builds on the historic investments in research contained in the recovery plan.

So we double the budget of key agencies, including the National Science Foundation, a primary source of funding for academic research; and the National Institute of Standards and Technology, which supports a wide range of pursuits from improving health information technology to measuring carbon pollution, from testing smart grid designs to developing advanced manufacturing processes.

And my budget doubles funding for the Department of Energy's Office of Science, which builds and operates accelerators, colliders, supercomputers, high-energy light sources, and facilities for making nano-materials, because we know that a nation's potential for scientific discovery is defined by the tools that it makes available to its researchers.

But the renewed commitment of our Nation will not be driven by Government investment alone. It's a commitment that extends from the laboratory to the marketplace. And that's why my budget makes the research and experimentation tax credit permanent. This is a tax credit that returns $2 to the economy for every dollar we spend, by helping companies afford the often high costs of developing new ideas, new

technologies, and new products. Yet, at times, we've allowed it to lapse or only renewed it year to year. I've heard this time and again from entrepreneurs across this country: By making this credit permanent we make it possible for businesses to plan the kinds of projects that create jobs and economic growth.

Second, in no area will innovation be more important than in the development of new technologies to produce, use, and save energy, which is why my administration has made an unprecedented commitment to developing a 21st century clean energy economy, and why we put a scientist in charge of the Department of Energy.

Our future on this planet depends on our willingness to address the challenge posed by carbon pollution. And our future as a nation depends upon our willingness to embrace this challenge as an opportunity to lead the world in pursuit of new discovery.

When the Soviet Union launched Sputnik a little more than a half century ago, Americans were stunned. The Russians had beaten us to space. And we had to make a choice: We could accept defeat or we could accept the challenge. And as always, we chose to accept the challenge.

President Eisenhower signed legislation to create NASA and to invest in science and math education, from grade school to graduate school. And just a few years later, a month after his address to the 1961 annual meeting of the National Academy of Sciences, President Kennedy boldly declared before a joint session of Congress that the United States would send a man to the Moon and return him safely to the Earth.

The scientific community rallied behind this goal and set about achieving it. And it would not only lead to those first steps on the Moon, it would lead to giant leaps in our understanding here at home. That Apollo program produced technologies that have improved kidney dialysis and water purification systems, sensors to test for hazardous gasses, energy-saving building materials, fire-resistant fabrics used by firefighters and soldiers. More broadly, the enormous investment in that era—in science and technology, in education and research funding—produced a great outpouring of curiosity and creativity, the benefits of which have been incalculable. There are those of you in this audience who became scientists because of that commitment. We have to replicate that.

There will be no single Sputnik moment for this generation's challenges to break our dependence on fossil fuels. In many ways, this makes the challenge even tougher to solve, and makes it all the more important to keep our eyes fixed on the work ahead.

But energy is our great project—this generation's great project. And that's why I've set a goal for our Nation that we will reduce our carbon pollution by more than 80 percent by 2050. And that is why I'm pursuing, in concert with Congress, the policies that will help meet us—help us meet this goal.

My recovery plan provides the incentives to double our Nation's capacity to generate renewable energy over the next few years, extending the production tax credit, providing loan guarantees, and offering grants to spur investment. Just take one example: Federally funded research and development has dropped the cost of solar panels by tenfold over the last three decades. Our renewed efforts will ensure that solar and other clean energy technologies will be competitive.

My budget includes $150 billion over 10 years to invest in sources of renewable energy as well as energy efficiency. It supports efforts at NASA, recommended as a priority by the National Research Council, to develop new space-based capabilities to help us better understand our changing climate.

And today I'm also announcing that for the first time, we are funding an initiative, recommended by this organization, called the Advanced Research Projects Agency for Energy, or ARPA–E. This is based, not surprisingly, on DARPA, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, which was created during the Eisenhower administration in response to Sputnik. It has been charged throughout its history with conducting high-risk, high-reward research. And the precursor to the Internet, known as ARPANET, stealth technology, the

Global Positioning System all owe a debt to the work of DARPA.

So ARPA–E seeks to do the same kind of high-risk, high-reward research. My administration will pursue, as well, comprehensive legislation to place a market-based cap on carbon emissions. We will make renewable energy the profitable kind of energy. We will put in place the resources so that scientists can focus on this critical area. And I am confident that we will find a wellspring of creativity just waiting to be tapped by researchers in this room and entrepreneurs across our country. We can solve this problem.

Now, the nation that leads the world in 21st century clean energy will be the nation that leads in the 21st century global economy. I believe America can and must be that nation. But in order to lead in the global economy and to ensure that our businesses can grow and innovate, and our families can thrive, we're also going to have to address the shortcomings of our health care system.

The Recovery Act will support the long overdue step of computerizing America's medical records, to reduce the duplication, waste, and errors that cost billions of dollars and thousands of lives. But it's important to note, these records also hold the potential of offering patients the chance to be more active participants in the prevention and treatment of their diseases. We must maintain patient control over these records and respect their privacy. At the same time, we have the opportunity to offer billions and billions of anonymous data points to medical researchers who may find in this information evidence that can help us better understand disease.

History also teaches us the greatest advances in medicine have come from scientific breakthroughs, whether the discovery of antibiotics, or improved public health practices, vaccines for smallpox and polio and many other infectious diseases, antiretroviral drugs that can return AIDS patients to productive lives, pills that can control certain types of blood cancers, so many others.

Because of recent progress—not just in biology, genetics, and medicine, but also in physics, chemistry, computer science, and engineering—we have the potential to make enormous progress against diseases in the coming decades. And that's why my administration is committed to increasing funding for the National Institutes of Health, including $6 billion to support cancer research, part of a sustained, multi-year plan to double cancer research in our country.

Next, we are restoring science to its rightful place. On March 9th, I signed an executive memorandum with a clear message: Under my administration, the days of science taking a back seat to ideology are over. Our progress as a nation—and our values as a nation—are rooted in free and open inquiry. To undermine scientific integrity is to undermine our democracy. It is contrary to our way of life.

That's why I've charged John Holdren and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy with leading a new effort to ensure that Federal policies are based on the best and most unbiased scientific information. I want to be sure that facts are driving scientific decisions, and not the other way around. [*Laughter*]

As part of this effort, we've already launched a web site that allows individuals to not only make recommendations to achieve this goal, but to collaborate on those recommendations. It's a small step, but one that's creating a more transparent, participatory, and democratic Government.

We also need to engage the scientific community directly in the work of public policy. And that's why, today, I am announcing the appointment—we are filling out the President's Council of Advisers on Science and Technology, known as PCAST, and I intend to work with them closely. Our Cochairs have already been introduced, Dr. Varmus and Dr. Lander, along with John. And this council represents leaders from many scientific disciplines who will bring a diversity of experiences and views. And I will charge PCAST with advising me about national strategies to nurture and sustain a culture of scientific innovation.

In addition to John—sorry, the—I just noticed that I jumped the gun here—go ahead and move it up. [*Laughter*] I had already introduced all you guys.

In biomedicine, just to give you an example of what PCAST can do, we can harness the historic convergence between life sciences and physical sciences that's underway today; undertaking public projects, in the spirit of the Human Genome Project, to create data and capabilities that fuel discoveries in tens of thousands of laboratories; and identifying and overcoming scientific and bureaucratic barriers to rapidly translating scientific breakthroughs into diagnostics and therapeutics that serve patients.

In environmental science, it will require strengthening our weather forecasting, our Earth observation from space, the management of our Nation's land, water and forests, and the stewardship of our coastal zones and ocean fisheries.

We also need to work with our friends around the world. Science, technology, and innovation proceed more rapidly and more cost-effectively when insights, costs, and risks are shared; and so many of the challenges that science and technology will help us meet are global in character. This is true of our dependence on oil, the consequences of climate change, the threat of epidemic disease, and the spread of nuclear weapons.

And that's why my administration is ramping up participation in—and our commitment to—international science and technology cooperation across the many areas where it is clearly in our interest to do so. In fact, this week, my administration is gathering the leaders of the world's major economies to begin the work of addressing our common energy challenges together.

Fifth, since we know that the progress and prosperity of future generations will depend on what we do now to educate the next generation, today I'm announcing a renewed commitment to education in mathematics and science. This is something I care deeply about. Through this commitment, American students will move from the middle of the top—from the middle to the top of the pack in science and math over the next decade, for we know that the nation that out-educates us today will outcompete us tomorrow. And I don't intend to have us out-educated.

We can't start soon enough. We know that the quality of math and science teachers is the most influential single factor in determining whether a student will succeed or fail in these subjects. Yet in high school more than 20 percent of students in math and more than 60 percent of students in chemistry and physics are taught by teachers without expertise in these fields. And this problem is only going to get worse. There is a projected shortfall of more than 280,000 math and science teachers across the country by 2015. And that's why I'm announcing today that States making strong commitments and progress in math and science education will be eligible to compete later this fall for additional funds under the Secretary of Education's $5 billion Race to the Top program.

And I'm challenging States to dramatically improve achievement in math and science by raising standards, modernizing science labs, upgrading curriculum, and forging partnerships to improve the use of science and technology in our classrooms. I'm challenging States, as well, to enhance teacher preparation and training, and to attract new and qualified math and science teachers to better engage students and reinvigorate those subjects in our schools.

And in this endeavor, we will work to support inventive approaches. Let's create systems that retain and reward effective teachers, and let's create new pathways for experienced professionals to go into the classroom. There are, right now, chemists who could teach chemistry, physicists who could teach physics, statisticians who could teach mathematics. But we need to create a way to bring the expertise and the enthusiasm of these folks—folks like you—into the classroom.

There are States, for example, doing innovative work. I'm pleased to announce that Governor Ed Rendell of Pennsylvania will lead an effort with the National Governors Association to increase the number of States that are making science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education a top priority. Six States are currently participating in the initiative, including Pennsylvania, which has launched an effective program to ensure that

the State has the skilled workforce in place to draw the jobs of the 21st century. And I want every State, all 50 States, to participate.

But as you know, our work does not end with a high school diploma. For decades, we led the world in educational attainment, and as a consequence we led the world in economic growth. The GI bill, for example, helps send a generation to college. But in this new economy, we've come to trail other nations in graduation rates, in educational achievement, and in the production of scientists and engineers.

That's why my administration has set a goal that will greatly enhance our ability to compete for the high-wage, high-tech jobs of the future, and to foster the next generation of scientists and engineers. In the next decade, by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. That is a goal that we are going to set. And we've provided tax credits and grants to make a college education more affordable.

My budget also triples the number of National Science Foundation graduate research fellowships. This program was created as part of the space race five decades ago. In the decades since, it's remained largely the same size, even as the numbers of students who seek these fellowships has skyrocketed. We ought to be supporting these young people who are pursuing scientific careers, not putting obstacles in their path.

So this is how we will lead the world in new discoveries in this new century. But I think all of you understand it will take far more than the work of Government. It will take all of us. It will take all of you. And so today I want to challenge you to use your love and knowledge of science to spark the same sense of wonder and excitement in a new generation.

America's young people will rise to the challenge if given the opportunity, if called upon to join a cause larger than themselves. We've got evidence. You know, the average age in NASA's mission control during the Apollo 17 mission was just 26. I know that young people today are just as ready to tackle the grand challenges of this century.

So I want to persuade you to spend time in the classroom, talking and showing young people what it is that your work can mean, and what it means to you. I want to encourage you to participate in programs to allow students to get a degree in science fields and a teaching certificate at the same time. I want us all to think about new and creative ways to engage young people in science and engineering, whether it's science festivals, robotics competitions, fairs that encourage young people to create and build and invent, to be makers of things, not just consumers of things.

I want you to know that I'm going to be working alongside you. I'm going to participate in a public awareness and outreach campaign to encourage students to consider careers in science and mathematics and engineering, because our future depends on it. And the Department of Energy and the National Science Foundation will be launching a joint initiative to inspire tens of thousands of American students to pursue these very same careers, particularly in clean energy.

It will support an educational campaign to capture the imagination of young people who can help us meet the energy challenge, and will create research opportunities for undergraduates and educational opportunities for women and minorities who too often have been underrepresented in scientific and technological fields, but are no less capable of inventing the solutions that will help us grow our economy and save our planet.

And it will support fellowships and interdisciplinary graduate programs and partnerships between academic institutions and innovative companies to prepare a generation of Americans to meet this generational challenge. For we must always remember that somewhere in America there's an entrepreneur seeking a loan to start a business that could transform an industry, but she hasn't secured it yet. There's a researcher with an idea for an experiment that might offer a new cancer treatment, but he hasn't found the funding yet. There's a child with an inquisitive mind staring up at the night sky. And maybe she has the potential to change our world, but she doesn't know it yet.

As you know, scientific discovery takes far more than the occasional flash of brilliance, as important as that can be. Usually, it takes time

and hard work and patience; it takes training; it requires the support of a nation. But it holds a promise like no other area of human endeavor.

In 1968, a year defined by loss and conflict and tumult, Apollo 8 carried into space the first human beings ever to slip beyond Earth's gravity, and the ship would circle the Moon 10 times before returning home. But on its fourth orbit, the capsule rotated and for the first time Earth became visible through the windows. Bill Anders, one of the astronauts aboard Apollo 8, scrambled for a camera, and he took a photo that showed the Earth coming up over the Moon's horizon. It was the first ever taken from so distant a vantage point, and it soon became known as "Earthrise."

Anders would say that the moment forever changed him, to see our world, this pale blue sphere, without borders, without divisions, at once so tranquil and beautiful and alone. "We came all this way to explore the Moon," he said, "and the most important thing is that we discovered the Earth."

Yes, scientific innovation offers us a chance to achieve prosperity. It has offered us benefits that have improved our health and our lives, improvements we take too easily for granted. But it gives us something more. At root, science forces us to reckon with the truth as best as we can ascertain it.

And some truths fill us with awe. Others force us to question long-held views. Science can't answer every question, and indeed, it seems at times the more we plumb the mysteries of the physical world, the more humble we must be. Science cannot supplant our ethics or our values, our principles or our faith. But science can inform those things and help put those values—these moral sentiments, that faith—can put those things to work, to feed a child or to heal the sick, to be good stewards of this Earth.

We are reminded that with each new discovery and the new power it brings comes new responsibility; that the fragility, the sheer specialness of life requires us to move past our differences and to address our common problems, to endure and continue humanity's strivings for a better world.

As President Kennedy said when he addressed the National Academy of Sciences more than 45 years ago: "The challenge, in short, may be our salvation."

Thank you all for all your past, present, and future discoveries. May God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:12 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Ralph J. Cicerone, president, National Academy of Sciences; John P. Holdren, Director, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy; Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano; Secretary of Energy Steven Chu; and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

Remarks Honoring the 2008 and 2009 NCAA Women's Basketball Champion University of Connecticut Huskies
April 27, 2009

Hello, everybody. Please have a seat. Have a seat—except you guys. You guys can't sit. [*Laughter*] It is just wonderful to be here on this beautiful day. Congratulations to Coach Geno on just the incredible season that took place as a consequence of these extraordinary young women.

I want to just say that it is a thrill. This is one of my favorite things about the job. I am a big fan. I want to congratulate everybody who runs the UCONN program, from the assistants to the trainers, to the students to the ticket-takers, and of course, the UCONN fans everywhere, you should all be extraordinarily proud.

And I want to thank again Coach, and his wife Kathy, for being here. Congratulations also on being coach of the year, although when you win by an average of 30 points, it's not that hard of a selection to make. [*Laughter*] And

we are thrilled that you're going to be coaching the women's basketball team in the 2012 Olympics. You're going to do a great job.

Under Coach Auriemma's leadership, this Huskies program has redefined excellence again and again: six of the last 15 NCAA titles; five undefeated regular seasons; three undefeated championship seasons; two 39 and 0 seasons. But for this team, an undefeated season just wasn't enough, they became the first team in NCAA history, men or women's, to win every single game by double digits, which is just an unbelievable statistic.

I want to congratulate also Maya, who is here—Maya Moore—there you are. Raise your hand. Naismith Award, National Player of the Year, and an equally impressive achievement—Maya was one of only five players chosen nationwide as first-team Academic All-American. So give it up for Maya.

Renee Montgomery—where's Renee? There you are, Renee, holding the ball—for winning the Honda Sports Award that recognizes the top women's player in the country not just for athletics, but also academics, leadership, and willingness to give back to her community; and to all the players who make a true team.

It's clear these women have a competitive streak, that's from what I understand, they have trouble sometimes turning off that competitive streak. I've heard that "Movie Pictionary" gets pretty fierce among the women here. [*Laughter*]

But Coach Geno and each of these women also understands that being champion doesn't stop when you step off the court. Just last week, these ladies were recognized by the NCAA for top academic performance as a team. And over the course of 24 seasons, Coach Geno's teams have a 100-percent graduation rate. That is worthy of some applause.

They also spend time off the court in service to others. "Geno's Cancer Team"—and I'm wearing a bracelet that I just got, right here, I want to show it off—raises money to fight cancer. And these young women visit pediatric patients, mentor at-risk youth to show they can make something of themselves, and give their time to folks in the communities who need it most.

All of this makes the Storrs community stronger; it makes the State of Connecticut stronger; it makes our country stronger, and I know this team gets a lot out of it in return.

I also want to say something as a father. You know, it was this program in the mid-1990s as much as anything that helped propel women's basketball into the national consciousness. And thanks to players like each of these women and those who came before them, our young women today look at themselves differently, especially tall young women, like my daughters. My girls look at the TV when I'm watching SportsCenter and they see women staring back. That shows them that they can be champions too. And so, as a father, I want to thank all of you. Thank you to all the NCAA female athletes who work hard day in, day out to set a positive example to which our daughters can all aspire, to be healthy and active, to be part of a team.

Finally, I understand that Coach Geno has promised to go 40 and 0 next season. [*Laughter*] So, Coach, if that happens, I guarantee you that you will be welcome back at the White House. [*Laughter*]

All right, give them a big round of applause.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:20 p.m. on the South Portico at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Geno Auriemma, head coach, Maya Moore, forward, and Renee Montgomery, guard, University of Connecticut women's basketball team.

Memorandum on Delegation of Certain Authority Under the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008
April 27, 2009

Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense

Subject: Delegation of Certain Authority Under the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including section 301 of title 3, United States Code, I hereby delegate to you the functions and authority conferred upon the President by section 722 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008, Public Law 110–181, to establish and maintain a Joint Pathology Center in the Department of Defense.

You are authorized and directed to notify the appropriate congressional committees and publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: This memorandum was not received for publication in the *Federal Register*.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Senior Officials at the Federal Bureau of Investigation and an Exchange With Reporters
April 28, 2009

The President. Hello, everybody. Good to see you. I'm really looking forward to having a chance to talk to Bob and the rest of his team. He has been integral in many of our national security conversations, our counterterrorism strategy. I am extraordinarily pleased with the job that the Director has done not just during my tenure in office, but preceding me.

By all accounts, the FBI has done an outstanding job of transitioning during an age of terrorism, cyber threats, a whole host—identity theft—a whole host of new challenges. They have been able to adapt. And with the Director at the helm, I have very, very great confidence that the FBI will continue to help keep the American people safe.

I'm also pleased to see that there's been, I think, greatly improved coordination between the FBI and State and local law enforcement officials, something that had not always been there previously. I think it's been greatly improved over the last several years.

So this gives me, basically, an opportunity to hear directly from the FBI, and to say thank you to all the dedicated agents and everybody who's out there working in the field to keep us safe each and every day.

All right.

Air Force Presidential Jet Photo Opportunity Over New York City

Q. Sir, what do you think of the Air Force One incident——

The President. No—no questions——

Q. ——over New York City yesterday, sir?

Q. Are you concerned about New York City yesterday, sir, with the Air Force plane?

The President. It was a mistake, as was stated. It was something we found out about along with all of you, and it will not happen again.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:10 a.m. at the J. Edgar Hoover FBI Building. In his remarks, he referred to Robert S. Mueller III, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks to Federal Bureau of Investigation Employees
April 28, 2009

Good afternoon, everybody. Well, it is a good excuse for you to be outside on a nice day. And it is a great honor to be here with the men and women of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Now, I am grateful to the FBI for the T-shirts, for the teddy bear for the girls; even though we've kept our promise on the dog, I wouldn't want to come home emptyhanded. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank your outstanding Director, Robert Mueller—[*applause*]—not just for the introduction, but because Bob has led the Bureau during incredibly challenging times. He became only the sixth Director of the FBI just 1 week before the 9/11 attacks, and since then he has worked as hard as anybody to prevent additional attacks and to carry out the FBI's enormous responsibilities. So I appreciate him, and I appreciate all of you. Thank you.

So last summer, the FBI celebrated its 100th anniversary. I think it's safe to say that it has been an eventful century for the Bureau. Back in 1908—oh, did somebody faint? Do we have a EMT here? Right down here. Just give him a little bit of space. This happened during my political campaign all the time. I was talking too long, people would be falling out every which way. [*Laughter*] They're usually fine, they just need a little bit of air and a little bit of water. Right down here, right in the middle. Not you—[*laughter*]—you're doing fine. Right in here. All right, I think they'll be all right.

So back in 1908 there were just 34 Special Agents reporting to Theodore Roosevelt's Attorney General. Today, there are over 30,000 men and women who work for the FBI. Back in 1908, those agents worked out of one building here in Washington. And today, you work here at FBI headquarters and at field offices across America and in countries around the world.

So much has changed in the last 100 years. Thank God for change. And part of what makes the FBI so unique is its ability to adapt to an ever-changing world. Back in 1908, even the most imaginative of minds would have struggled to anticipate all of the challenges that would confront the Bureau: from bank robbers to bootleggers, from hate crimes to white-collar criminals, from public corruption to counterintelligence, from international terrorism to cyber threats.

The challenges of the 21st century have called on us to think anew, and to act anew. And in recent years, the Bureau has undergone a profound transformation to keep pace. With the attacks of 9/11, your mission became focused more than ever before on prevention, so that we have the capacity to uncover terrorist plots before they take hold. With the spread of new technologies, you increasingly confront adversaries in unconventional areas, from transnational networks to cyber crimes and espionage. And through it all, you must continue to stay one step ahead of all who step outside of the law.

And I know that change means much more than moving around some boxes on an organizational chart. You've set new priorities. You've developed new capabilities. You're working to use new technologies and teach new skills. And because these challenges cross borders, both seen and unseen, you've developed new partnerships abroad, while sharing information more effectively with law enforcement here at home.

This is a tough business, but it is essential to protecting our country. Because in the end, it's your hard work that makes the difference: your decisions, your analysis, your action. Because of you, the men and women of the FBI, the American people are safer, and our country is stronger. For that, you have my personal gratitude, but you also have the thanks of a grateful nation.

So I know that much has changed in the last 100 years. But as your Director said, I know that some things have remained constant. That starts with the values that we have sworn to uphold: liberty and equality, opportunity, and the rule of law. That's the foundation upon which America is built. That's the purpose that has always guided our power. And that is why we must always reject as the false—as false choices the choice between our security and our ideals.

In so many ways, the FBI is a unique institution. You're unique because the FBI is both an

intelligence agency and a law enforcement agency. You must both prevent danger and help us pursue those who carry it out. You protect us and you protect the civil liberties that we cherish.

But after all, that is why America is unique, because of that fundamental belief that we are committed both to our security and to the rule of law, because of that hard-earned truth that we are always stronger when we act in concert with our most deeply held values.

I have no illusions that this is simple or easy. Many of you made enormous sacrifices and are incredibly dedicated. Living our values means that we must hold ourselves to higher standard than our enemies. We face a long struggle against a determined adversary. We know that Al Qaida is not constrained by a constitution or by allegiance to anything other than a hateful ideology and a determination to kill as many innocents as possible. But what makes the United States of America so special is precisely the fact that we are willing to uphold our values and our ideals not just when it's easy, but when it's hard. We've been called to serve in such a time.

And I have to say that I am heartened but what I see here today. Each of you has made the decision to serve your country, and you are dong so at a critical time. And you know, none of us can know with certain what the future will hold. But I do know that the FBI can and will continue to adapt to new dangers, that you will be critical in leading the way in keeping this country safe. And we are counting on you.

There's much to celebrate from the FBI's first 100 days [years].* We remember notorious criminals who have been caught, and public corruption that has been ended, and civil rights that have been protected, and terrorist plots that have been uncovered. None of that would have been possible without the work of men and women like you, and we're calling on you again.

Behind me is the motto that you carry forward and that your Director alluded to: "Fidelity, Bravery, and Integrity." These are more than words etched into a building; they're a signal of the character of the men and women who work here. And I am confident that if you stay true to those words, no matter what challenge may come our way, we'll be able to look back a hundred years from now with the satisfaction that you advanced the cause of America's security and America's ideals in your time. What an enormous gift that is to give back to your country.

Thank you, God Bless you, and God Bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:33 a.m. at the J. Edgar Hoover FBI Building.

Remarks Honoring the 2009 National and State Teachers of the Year
April 28, 2009

Please, everybody, have a seat on this beautiful day. Welcome. This is our first official Rose Garden ceremony—a place where so many—yes, that's worth applause, sure, why not—[*laughter*]—this is place where so many Presidents have honored so many citizens who've made extraordinary contributions to the life of our Nation.

Before I get to the main event, I want to make sure that we acknowledge, first of all, somebody who I think will end up being written up as one of the greatest Secretaries of Education we've ever had, please give a round of applause to Arne Duncan; an outstanding educator in her own right, Dr. Jill Biden. And I want to give credit to Representative Jim Himes, who's here, and he represents the Fourth District of Connecticut, which includes Mr. Mullen's school district. So, Jim—[*applause*].

You know, we've got a lot of teachers here today, and I'm a big fan of teachers because every single day in classrooms all across America, you are making a difference. You

* White House correction.

don't always get the recognition that you deserve. We don't always value the teaching profession like we should. But every once in a while, I think people start to understand, not just in their own lives but in the lives of the Nation, how important the teaching profession is and how we've got to do a better job of lifting it up. In a global economy where the greatest job qualification isn't what you can do but what you know, our teachers are the key to our Nation's success; to whether America will lead the world in the discoveries and the innovations and economic prosperity of this new century.

And that's why as President I'm committed to doing everything I can to support the work of teachers. That's why we're working to create better standards and assessments that teachers can use in their classroom. That's why we're promoting innovation in teaching and learning, making critical investments in early childhood education, and helping more Americans walk through the door of higher education.

And it's why we're taking groundbreaking steps to recruit, prepare, support, and reward outstanding teachers, to encourage our best and brightest young people to follow in the footsteps of folks just like you. This is especially critical right now, as so many teachers from the baby boom generation are preparing to retire—although, they all look pretty young back here—[*laughter*]—we're not worried about that. And recent evaluations of student performance show that while we're making progress, we still have a long way to go.

I know, personally, Michelle knows that what teachers do is not easy. My sister, Maya, is a teacher; Jill Biden, a teacher. We know how hard teachers work. And I know what all of you do by staying past that last bell, staying up late grading those papers, putting together lesson plans, spending your own money on books and supplies, and going beyond the call of duty. You do it because you know that's what will make a difference, because you believe that there's no such thing as a child that can't learn; that every child has their own gifts, and it's up to us to discover them, and it's up to us to see in our children what they can't yet see in themselves.

And for you, those teachers who are in attendance today and for so many of your colleagues across this country, teaching is not just about a paycheck, it's a passion and it's a calling.

Now, nobody, I think, exhibits that more than our honoree today, our Teacher of the Year, Tony Mullen. You know, Tony knew early on in life that he wanted to be a teacher. But his parents passed away when he was young, and he had to find work, first at a factory, then at the New York Police Department, where he rose from police officer all the way to captain.

But Tony never lost sight of his dream, attending college while he worked, becoming the first in his family to get a degree, and going on to get a master's degree in education.

And during his time on the force, Tony saw a lot of young people who'd gotten themselves in trouble, and he knew he wanted to give kids like that a second chance. So when he left the NYPD, Tony actively searched for a job description that included phrases like "working with students with severe behavioral and emotional problems," kids whom others might see as difficult or impossible or lost causes. Tony didn't see them as lost causes. As his superintendent put it, Tony "considers working with these students an honor and a privilege."

In his application for this award, Tony emphasized the importance of passion which, as he puts it, "ignites a flame too bright to be ignored by students." That is the passion Tony brings to his classroom every day, striving to engage every student, connecting with those no one else can reach, spending hours counseling students individually, listening compassionately, giving them his fullest attention.

And that's just the beginning. In his spare time, Tony mentors fellow teachers, he leads a program to provide academic support to students who've been expelled, and he's the volunteer commissioner for a youth baseball league that grew from 200 to 1,000 children under his leadership, giving so many young people the self-confidence and teamwork skills they need to succeed.

Tony doesn't ask for anything in return. As he put it, "A teacher can receive no greater reward than the knowledge that he or she helped recover a lost student."

Each of us carries with us in life the love and wisdom of people like Tony, the special few

who were there for us when we needed it most: who pushed us when we were afraid; who pulled us back when we were headed in the wrong direction; who refused to give up on us, no matter how difficult we were. I know that's certainly true for me. I was telling Tony and his family in the office, Michelle and I don't come from a fancy background. The only reason that we're here is because at some point there were people like Tony who helped steer us in the right direction.

In recognizing Tony and all of you today, we're also recognizing countless others who make the lives of our young people a little bit better. And for that, we honor you, we thank you, today and every single day.

So Tony Mullen, God bless you and God bless the United States of America. Give Tony a big round of applause.

[*At this point, Mr. Mullen made brief remarks.*]

Well, thank you everybody. And with that, enjoy the day. I'm going to shake a few hands, and I'm sure the First Lady will as well.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:25 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden; Rep. James A. Himes; and his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Tony Mullen, 2009 Teacher of the Year.

Statement on Congressional Action on Hate Crimes Prevention Legislation
April 28, 2009

This week the House of Representatives is expected to consider H.R. 1913, the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009. I urge Members on both sides of the aisle to act on this important civil rights issue by passing this legislation to protect all of our citizens from violent acts of intolerance, legislation that will enhance civil rights protections, while also protecting our freedom of speech and association. I also urge the Senate to work with my administration to finalize this bill and to take swift action.

Remarks at a Swearing-In Ceremony for Kathleen Sebelius as Secretary of Health and Human Services
April 28, 2009

The President. Congratulations, Madam Secretary.

Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius. Thank you, sir.

The President. Here we go. We're just going to make a brief statement. I am thrilled to have Kathleen Sebelius as my new Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Obviously, we have a lot to do to make sure that health care is affordable for the American people, to deal with critical issues like food safety. But we wanted to swear her in right away because we've got a significant public health challenge that requires her immediate attention, and that is the H1N1 flu outbreak that we've seen initially in Mexico and we now see over a dozen cases here in the United States.

It is something that we have to monitor very carefully. The officials who have been in charge, including the Acting Director at the CDC, those at Department of Homeland Security, have done an outstanding job, a superb job, in managing the situation up to this point.

But we need all hands on deck, and so I am thrilled that we have Secretary Sebelius taking the reins. She is going to be immediately briefed on the issues that we're working on right now. I expect her to hit the ground running, and I have every confidence that given

her experience as a Governor who's managed crises before, who's worked on public health issues since she's been in public life, she is the right person at the right time for the job.

So congratulations. We are thrilled, and you are going to do a great job.

Secretary Sebelius. Thank you, sir. Honored to serve.

The President. Thank you.

All right, thanks, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:02 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Richard E. Besser, Acting Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 29.

Remarks on Senator Arlen Specter's Decision to Join the Senate Democratic Caucus

April 29, 2009

The President. Good morning, everybody.

Vice President Joe Biden. Mr. President, as we used to say in the Senate, I hope you'll excuse a point of personal privilege here. Arlen Specter has been my friend and my confidant and my partner, and I his partner, in scores and scores of major, major pieces of legislation and issues for a long time. And beyond that, Mr. President, he's been there for me every time things have been tough for me, and I hope I have been there for him.

And it gives me great pleasure, great pleasure, Mr. President, to now officially be in the same caucus with Arlen Specter. We've ridden the train for so many years, we've visited each other's homes, our families, that it's just, as, again, a point of personal privilege, it's just a delight to have no separation.

[*At this point, Vice President Biden made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

So, Mr. President, I am pleased to introduce a man of immense personal courage and unmatched integrity, my friend, Arlen Specter.

Sen. Arlen Specter. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Vice President, and thank you, Mr. President, for your support and encouragement.

I was unwilling to subject my 29-year record in the United States Senate to the Pennsylvania Republican primary electorate, but I am pleased to run in the primary on the Democratic ticket and am ready, willing, and anxious to take on all comers in a general election.

I have not represented the Republican Party; I have represented the people of Pennsylvania. And I will continue to do just that. As I said yesterday, I will not be an automatic 60th vote. There have been positions, which I talked about yesterday and will not reenumerate, where I stand in a different position from the traditional position of the Democrats, and I will continue that independence.

[*Sen. Specter made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

When I talked to the President yesterday, I said, "I haven't seen you in the elevator lately." His office used to be right down the hall from mine on the seventh floor of the Hart Building, and he hadn't come back lately, so I said I was calling him up just to chit-chat. And I got to know the President to some extent in the Senate. I talked too long already, but that's—Joe taught me how to do that.

Just one personal comment: The President approached me when he was Senator Obama, before the Democratic primary. And he said, "Tell me, Arlen, if a Jewish kid from Kansas can carry Pennsylvania, how can a black kid from Kansas carry Pennsylvania?" And I gave him some advice, and he became—[*laughter*]—he became President of the United States of America.

The President. That's how it worked. Thank you so much, Arlen. Thank you.

Well, let me start off by just saying I'm thrilled to have Arlen in the Democratic Caucus. I have told him that he will have my full

support in the Democratic primary. Joe Biden has said the same thing. We are confident that Arlen Specter is going to get a sixth term in the Senate, and the American people are going to be better off for it.

I'd like to say a few more things about Arlen, but before I do, I'd like to briefly address the ongoing challenge posed by the H1N1 flu virus.

We are closely and continuously monitoring the emerging cases of this virus throughout the United States. Overnight we also received confirmation that an infant in Texas has died as a result of this virus. And my thoughts and prayers and deepest condolences go out to the family, as well as those who are ill and recovering from this flu.

This is obviously a serious situation, serious enough to take the utmost precautions. Secretary Napolitano, Secretary Sebelius, and our entire team are in close contact with State and local authorities around the Nation. But I would also urge health agencies in local communities to be vigilant about identifying suspected cases of this virus in your areas and reporting them to the appropriate State and Federal authorities in a timely way. We need your assistance.

It's also the recommendation of our public health officials that schools with confirmed or suspected cases of H1N1 should strongly consider temporarily closing so that we can be as safe as possible. If the situation becomes more serious and we have to take more extensive steps, then parents should also think about contingencies if schools in their areas do temporarily shut down, figuring out and planning what their childcare situation would be.

If we ended up having a school closure, a child was sick, just sending a child from the school to a day care center is not a good solution. So we would have to think through, and each parent, I think, would have to think through what options would be available to them in the event that this became more serious.

Yesterday, I also requested from Congress an immediate 1.5 billion in emergency funding. This funding will ensure that we have adequate supplies of vaccines and the equipment to handle a potential outbreak. It will ensure that these vaccines and equipment get to where they need to go around the country. And it will provide for sufficient planning and preparation at the State and local levels.

And every American should know that the Federal Government is prepared to do whatever is necessary to control the impact of this virus. But there are also steps that Americans can take individually. They're the same steps that you would take to prevent any other flu: Keep your hands washed, cover your mouth when you cough, stay home from work if you are sick, keep your children home from school if they are sick.

I'll continue to get constant updates on the situation from the responsible agencies, and we will continue to offer regular updates to the American people about the steps they need to take and the steps that we are taking. And I can assure you that we will be vigilant in monitoring the progress of this flu and I will make every judgment based on the best science available.

Now, part of the reason we have such an outstanding array of scientists and researchers is because of the tireless efforts of the gentleman standing to my right. Having courageously battled multiple life-threatening diseases of his own—and let me tell you, Arlen Specter is one tough hombre—he has become a champion for public health in this country. He's most recently responsible for the increase in funding for the National Institutes of Health so that it can continue to discover the cures and treatments that will save countless lives.

And that brings me to why we're here today. Today I have the honor of standing next to the newest Democrat from the State of Pennsylvania. I know that the decision Senator Specter made yesterday wasn't easy. It required long and careful consideration, and it required courage. But I know that it also reflects an independence that has been the hallmark of Arlen Specter's career since the days he arrived in Washington. He has never been in the Senate to fight for any particular party, but rather for the men and women of Pennsylvania who sent him here.

And this is also why I don't expect that Senator Specter will agree with every decision I make and support every single one of those policies. I don't accept—I don't expect Arlen to be a rubber stamp; I don't expect any Member of Congress to be a rubber stamp. In fact, I'd like to think that Arlen's decision reflects a recognition that this administration is open to many different ideas and many different points of view, that we seek cooperation and common ground, and that in these 100 days we've begun to move this Nation in the right direction.

As I told Senator Specter yesterday, he has my full support, my full commitment to work with him on those areas where we do agree, areas like health care, education, expanding America's manufacturing base, and medical research. I look forward to working with the Senator on these and other issues in the coming weeks and months. I'm eager to receive his counsel and advice, especially when he disagrees. And I have great respect and admiration for the decision that he has made.

Senator Specter often tells the story about his father, Harry Specter, who came to this country from Russia nearly a century ago. He fought in World War I and was seriously wounded in action. Later, he became one of the thousands of veterans who never received the bonus that our Government promised in return for the brave service that they had rendered to our Nation. Many of these veterans would later march on Washington because of that broken promise, and some were shot at by their own Government because they were voicing dissent.

Arlen Specter has said that his career in public service has been one long journey to get his father's bonus. And until he does, he plans to keep on running. It's a metaphor that's particularly apt today as he begins the next chapter in his proud effort to fight for all those men and women who need and deserve a voice in Washington.

And so I'm grateful that he is here. And I'm also grateful that Joe Biden paid him a little attention on the train. [*Laughter*] Thank you much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano; and Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius.

Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session in Arnold, Missouri

April 29, 2009

The President. Thank you so much. Thank you. Everybody please have a seat. Have a seat. Thank you so much. What a wonderful introduction. It's good to be out of Washington, good to be back in the Midwest.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. Love you back.

Let me, first of all, ask everybody to give a huge round of applause to Linda for the great introduction and everything that she's been doing in the community. Thank you so much.

I've got a few other friends who are here, you may know them, I want to make sure that I acknowledge them. One of, I think, the finest Members of Congress that we have and somebody who's just been a great friend of mine, she is somebody you want in the foxhole with you when you got a tough fight. Please give a huge round of applause to Claire McCaskill.

We've got one of the finest new Governors in the country, Jay Nixon. Where did Jay go? There he is. An outstanding secretary of State and somebody who I think may turn out to be pretty good in Washington, if she just so decides, Robin Carnahan. We've got attorney general Chris Koster here; State treasurer Clint Zweifel; a great friend who was with me from the start, Susan Montee, your State auditor. We have our outstanding host today, Mayor Ron Counts of Arnold. We've got Congressman Russ Carnahan, who's voting on the budget today, but I want everybody to give him a big round of applause anyway.

I want to thank everybody here at Fox High School for their hospitality. I want to thank your lovely school superintendent, who is just doing an outstanding job. Please stand up. I want to thank the Warriors for the basketball jersey, which I will wear with pride, although—[*applause*]—yeah! If I ever get to play basketball again—[*laughter*]—they've been keeping me a little busy.

It is great to be back in the middle of America, where common sense often reigns. And this reminds me of why I like to get out of Washington now and again. Last time I was in Missouri was just under 6 months ago, at a high school a lot like this one. We were in Springfield. It was 2 days before the election, and I was making my final case to the American people. And it was just an unbelievable crowd, bigger than anything anybody had expected. And so we're here in Missouri to—we were here in Missouri at the end of a long journey to the White House, and so now I want to come back and speak to you at the beginning of another long journey. Today marks 100 days since I took the oath of office to be your President—100 days. It's a good thing. [*Applause*] Thank you.

Now, back in November, some folks were surprised that we showed up in Springfield at the end of our campaign. But then again, some folks were surprised that we even started our campaign in the first place. They didn't give us much of a chance. They didn't think we could do things differently. They didn't know if this country was ready to move in a new direction.

But here's the thing, my campaign wasn't born in Washington. My campaign was rooted in neighborhoods just like this one, in towns and cities all across America, rooted in folks who work hard and look after their families and seek a brighter children—future for their children and for their communities and for their country. It was driven by workers who were tired of seeing their jobs shipped overseas, their health care costs go up, their dreams slip out of reach. It was grounded in a sense of unity and common purpose with every single American, whether they voted for me on election day or voted for somebody else. It was energized by every citizen who believed that the size of our challenges had outgrown the smallness of our politics. My campaign was possible because the American people wanted change.

I ran for President because I wanted to carry those voices—your voices—with me to Washington. And—[*applause*]—so I just want everybody to understand: You're who I'm working for every single day in the White House. I've heard your stories. I know you sent me to Washington because you believed in the promise of a better day. And I don't want to let you down.

You believed that after an era of selfishness and greed, that we could reclaim a sense of responsibility on Wall Street and in Washington, as well as on Main Street. You believed that instead of huge inequalities and an economy that's built on a bubble, we could restore a sense of fairness to our economy and build a new foundation for lasting growth and prosperity. You believed that at a time of war, we could stand strong against our enemies and stand firmly for our ideals, and show a new face of American leadership to the world. That's the change that you believed in. That's the trust you placed in me. It's something I will never forget, the fact that you made this possible.

So today, on my 100th day in office, I've come back to report to you, the American people, that we have begun to pick ourselves up and dust ourselves off, and we've begun the work of remaking America. We're working to remake America.

Now, we've got a lot of work to do, because on our first day in office we found challenges of unprecedented size and scope. Our economy was in the midst of the most serious downturn since the Great Depression. Banks had stopped lending. The housing market was crippled. The deficit was at $1.3 trillion. And meanwhile, families continued to struggle with health care costs, too many of our kids couldn't get the education they needed, the Nation remained trapped by our dangerous dependence on foreign oil.

Now, these challenges could not be met with half-measures. They couldn't be met with the same old formulas. They couldn't be

confronted in isolation. They demanded action that was bold and sustained. They demand action that is bold and sustained. They call on us to clear away the wreckage of a painful recession, but also, at the same time, lay the building blocks for a new prosperity. And that's the work that we've begun over these first 100 days.

To jump-start job creation and get our economy moving again, we passed the most ambitious economic recovery plan in our Nation's history. And already, we're beginning to see this change take hold. In Jefferson City, over 2,500 jobs will be created on Missouri's largest wind farm, so that American workers are harnessing clean, American energy. Across the State, roughly 20,000 transportation jobs will be supported by the Recovery Act, so that Missourians are rebuilding your roads, your bridges, your rails.

To restore fairness to our economy, we've taken several steps with Congress to strengthen the middle class. We cut taxes for 95 percent of American households through a tax cut that will put $120 billion directly into your pockets. We finally signed a law long overdue that will protect equal pay for equal work for American women. We extended health care to millions of children across this country.

We launched a housing plan that's already contributed to a spike in the number of homeowners who are refinancing their mortgages, which is the equivalent of another tax cut for them. And if you haven't refinanced, you might want to take a look and see if it's possible, because that can save people a lot of money. We've taken steps to unfreeze the market for auto loans and student loans and small-business loans. And we're acting with the full force of the Federal Government to ensure that our banks have the capital and the confidence to lend money to the families and business owners who keep this economy running.

Now, even as we cleared away the wreckage, I've also said that we can't go back to an economy that's built on a pile of sand, on inflated home prices and maxed-out credit cards; on overleveraged banks and outdated regulations that allowed the recklessness of just a few people to threaten the prosperity of all of us.

So that's why I introduced a budget and other measures that build on the Recovery Act to lay a new foundation for growth, a foundation that's built on five pillars that will strengthen our economy and help us compete in the 21st century: number one, new investments in education that will equip our workers with the right skills and training; number two, new investments in renewable energy that will create millions of jobs and new industries; number three, new investments in health care that will cut costs for families and businesses; number four, new savings that will bring down our deficit; and number five, new rules for Wall Street that reward drive and innovation.

Now, I've got to say that some of the people in Washington have been surprised. They said, "Boy, he's so ambitious; he's been trying to do so much." Now, maybe they're not accustomed to this, but there's no mystery to what we've done. The priorities that we've acted upon were the things that we said we'd do during the campaign. I mean, it's not like anybody should be surprised. The policies we've proposed were plans we talked about for 2 years, in places like this, all across the country with ordinary Americans. The changes that we've made are the changes we promised. That's what you should expect from a President. You may not always agree with me, but if you take a look at what I said I was going to do when I was running for office, and you now look at what we are in the middle of doing, we're doing what we said we'd do. So—[*applause*].

Now, after 100 days, I'm pleased with the progress we've made, but I'm not satisfied. I'm confident in the future, but I'm not content with the present, not when there are workers who are still out of jobs, families who still can't pay their bills; not when there are too many Americans who can't afford their health care, so many of our children being left behind and our Nation's not leading the world in developing 21st century energy. I'm not satisfied, and I know you aren't either. The crisis that we're confronting was many years in the making; it will take us time to overcome it. We've come a long way, we can see the light on the horizon, but we've got a much longer journey ahead.

And one of the encouraging things for me is the fact that the American people know this. You know that our progress has to be measured in the results that we achieve over many months and years, not the minute-by-minute talk in the media. And you know that progress comes from hard choices and hard work, not miracles. I'm not a miracle worker. We've got a lot of tough choices and hard decisions and hard work ahead of us. The 100th day might be a good time to reflect on where we are, but it's more important to where we're going that we focus on the future, because we can't rest until our economy is growing and we've built that new foundation for our prosperity.

We can't rest until we reform those outdated rules and regulations that allowed this crisis to happen in the first place. And that's why I've called for tough, new, commonsense rules of the road that punish abuse and reward drive and innovation in the financial sector. I expect a bill to arrive on my desk for signature before this year is out. We are going to make sure this kind of crisis does not happen again.

We can't rest until we have schools that prepare our children for the challenges of the 21st century. And we've already made historic investments in education and college affordability. I was talking to your superintendent about all the wonderful things that she's going to be able to do with some of the money that came out of the recovery package. We're going to continue to help our schools meet high standards and close achievement gaps. And we're going to reward teachers for performance and give them new pathways for advancement. And we will seek the goal of once again—[*applause*]. We are going to seek the goal of once again having the highest proportion of college graduates in the world—we're going to do it by 2020.

We can't rest until we harness the renewable energy that can create millions of new jobs and new industries. The Recovery Act will double the supply of renewable energy, but the only way to truly spark an energy transformation is through a gradual, market-based cap on carbon pollution so that energy—clean energy is the profitable kind of energy. And we can do this in a way that creates jobs. That's how we can grow our economy, enhance our security, and protect our planet at the same time.

I don't think we can rest until we have a 21st century health care system that makes sense, one that cuts costs for families and businesses across America. And that's why we invested in preventative care, we've invested in electronic records; that's why my budget makes a downpayment on reform that will finally make quality health care affordable for every American. And I look forward to working with both parties in Congress to make this reform a reality in the months to come.

And we can't rest until we restore the fiscal discipline that will keep us from leaving our children with a mountain of debt. And working with people like Claire McCaskill, we have already put forward a budget that will cut the deficit in half by the end of my first term. We've launched a procurement reform effort that will greatly reduce no-bid contracts and will save $40 billion. We're going through the budget line by line, page by page. We've already identified more than 100 programs to reduce or eliminate because they don't work. And I've personally asked the leadership in Congress to pass into law rules that follow the simple principle: You pay for what you spend, so that Government acts the same way any responsible family does. If you want a tax cut, you got to pay for it. If you want a new program, you got to pay for it. Tell the American people the truth: How are you going to pay for it?

And finally, we can't rest until America is secure and our leadership is restored. And that's why I've begun to end the war in Iraq through a responsible transition to Iraqi control. It is their country, they need to take control. That's why we have a new strategy to disrupt and dismantle and defeat Al Qaida in Afghanistan and Pakistan. That's why we've renewed our diplomacy to reduce the spread of nuclear weapons, to speak directly to our adversaries, and strengthen relations in the hemisphere.

And that's why we have rejected the false choice between our security and our ideals. That's why I ordered the closing of the

detention center at Guantanamo. That's why I prohibited the use of torture, because America is stronger than any enemy, and we always have been, precisely because we do what's right not just when it's easy, but when it's hard. That's what sets us apart.

We're living through extraordinary times. We didn't ask for all the challenges that we face, but we're determined to answer the call to meet them. That's the spirit I see everywhere I go. That's the spirit we need to sustain, because the answer to our problems will ultimately be found in the character of the American people. We need soldiers and diplomats, scientists, teachers, workers, entrepreneurs. We need your service. We need your active citizenship. That's why I recently signed a bill that will create hundreds of thousands of opportunities for the American people to serve. That's why I will continue to ask for your help and your ideas and your support to make the changes that we need.

I want to warn you, there will be setbacks. It will take time. But I promise you I will always tell you the truth about the challenges that we face and the steps that we are taking to meet them. I will continue to measure my progress by the progress that you see in your own lives. And I believe that years from now we are going to be able to look back at this time as the moment when the American people once again came together to reclaim their future. That's what this is about.

Thank you, everybody. Thank you.

All right, this is the fun part. Everybody sit back down. I'm going to take questions. There are no rules, nobody's been prescreened. And we're not going to be able to get through all of the questions that people want to ask, so if you can raise your hand, I will try to call on you. We're going to go girl, boy, girl, boy, so nobody thinks I'm biased. I'll try to just go around the gym and we'll get to as many as we can. If you can stand up, introduce yourself when the question's been asked, and we should have some microphones in the audience, right? Where are microphone people? Raise up your mikes. Okay, so we've got a few here. So wait for the microphone so everybody can hear your question.

All right, this gentleman right here—right there. Yes, you. I guess we're going boy, girl. You can go ahead and hand him the mike. Thanks.

U.S. Auto Industry

Q. Yes, my name is Ray Pashia, I'm a retired auto worker from General Motors. And I was just curious, with all the—what's going on in the news and with the contracts and everything, where is this all eventually going to leave the retirees, the pensions, and our health care? I mean, we also are considered middle class——

The President. Keep the mike near you.

Q. Oh, I'm sorry. We're also considered middle class, and it seems like they keep constantly wanting to take it away from the auto worker and prosecuting us, instead of the corporate that brought us to this.

The President. Good. Well, it's a good question. Let me talk about what's happening with autos, because, obviously, this is a big concern for everybody. I believe that the U.S. should have a strong auto industry; I believe that. One of the things, one of the transitions I want to make, I want us to get back to making things, not just shuffling paper around. And that—so the auto industry is a major part of that.

Now, what is also true is that the decisions that were made over decades put the U.S. auto industry in a bad spot. We used to build the cars that consumers wanted, and at a certain point those weren't the cars that were being designed. Now, in fairness to the auto industry, a lot of the cars that are coming out of Detroit now have gotten really good. They are on par with foreign imports. But the problem is, is that because of a lot of those bad decisions catching up, even though there's some very good products out there, overall the companies were in really bad shape.

Now, the Bush administration had already given several billions of dollars worth of aid, and GM and Chrysler were told to come up with a plan. When they presented the plan to us, my responsibility to taxpayers is to look at those plans in a realistic way and figure are these plans going to work in order to put these auto companies on a firm, solid footing where they can operate without government subsidies and

succeed and compete in the marketplace. Because we've got the best workers, we just need the best plans. Right? And—[*applause*].

Unfortunately, the plan that they presented just weren't realistic. I mean, we did a pretty thoroughgoing analysis of this thing and you couldn't—what they were doing wasn't painting a picture of how they could be viable over the long term—without being wards of the State. And, frankly, there's no way that we were going to get taxpayers to just, every few months, just give a few more billion dollars, because there are a lot of other industries that would love to have those kinds of subsidies.

So we are now at the point where Chrysler is supposed to report back to us in the next day or two about their plans for a potential merger with Fiat, and the Fiat management has actually done a good job transforming their industry. We're hoping that you can get a merger where the taxpayers will put in some money to sweeten the deal, but ultimately the goal is we get out of the business of building cars, and Chrysler goes and starts creating the cars that consumers want. And one of the potential advantages of a merger is new technologies where Chrysler starts making fuel-efficient, clean energy cars that will meet the needs of the future market.

We don't know yet whether the deal is going to get done. I will tell you that the workers at Chrysler have made enormous sacrifices—enormous sacrifices—to try to keep the company going. One of the key questions now is, are the bond holders, the lenders, the money people, are they willing to make sacrifices as well? We don't know yet, so there's still a series of negotiations that are taking place.

I can tell you that no matter what happens, we want to provide certain protections to retirees for their health care and their pensions. That will also be expensive for taxpayers. But my attitude is we got here not because our workers didn't do a great job trying to build a great product. It was because management decisions betrayed workers.

There are going to be some long-term adjustments that have to be made, though, both for Chrysler and GM. GM, by the way, has 30 more days, because their restructuring is more thoroughgoing than what was required with Chrysler. But I can guarantee you I will—I look at this from the perspective of how can I create a strong, viable, competitive auto industry that is giving workers an opportunity to build a great product, take pride in that product, and continue to support their families and build communities that are strong.

That's my entire orientation, and how do I do that in a way that doesn't waste taxpayer money, because, as I said, people in other industries would love help, as well, and I've got to be fair to people who aren't in the auto industry. If we're going to do it, it's got to be because we think that we've got a long-term plan that actually makes sense. I think we can get there, but we've still got a little more work to do.

All right. Young lady up there in the pink, right there. There we go.

Education Reform

Q. Hi, my name is Brenda Hudspeth, and I'm a school counselor in the Fox C–6 district. President Obama, what do you feel is the biggest challenge facing our educational system today, and how do you plan on meeting those challenges?

The President. Okay, excellent question. I believe that we've got a multitude of challenges. So rather than just isolate on one, let me talk about several.

Our children are coming out of high school—in some cases, they're not even graduating high school, but even if they graduate from high school—ranked lower on math, science scores than many other advanced industrialized countries. Nations like China and India are starting to turn out more engineers, more scientists. If we aren't able to compete technologically, we're not going to be able to compete, because this is a knowledge-based economy. We can have some people who are really willing to work hard, but if the technology is coming from overseas and all we're competing for is just our labor, then over time those countries will get richer, our countries will get poorer.

So we've got to upgrade across the board, not just in poor, underprivileged schools, but

across the board. We've got to upgrade the performance levels of our young people. Now, in order to do that, the single biggest ingredient is the quality of our teachers. Single most important factor in the classroom is the quality of the person standing at the front of the classroom. And that's why our recovery package put a lot of emphasis on teacher training, teacher recruitment, teacher retention, professional development.

And I've got a terrific young Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, who is—[*applause*]—and he is so passionate, but he's tough. And he wants to push school districts to really do what it takes to give teachers the support that they need. Now, that involves a whole range of things. It means that how we train and recruit teachers in the first place; how do we match them up with master teachers so that they learn best practices; how do we make sure that if they're coming in and they don't have all the professional background they need in something—a subject area like science, that we give them the training they need; and how do we recruit people who might be great teachers, but didn't go through the conventional channels. If there's a chemist out there somewhere who wants to teach, we should be able to get him into the classroom in an expedited way, because he or she is bringing skills that we need.

I just gave an award to the Teacher of the Year, who was a police officer, a cop—had gone to the—had become a captain in the New York City Police Department and then decided that he wanted to pursue his lifelong love of learning and went back to teach, and asked for the toughest-to-teach kids. Well, we want to encourage people like that who have a passion for teaching.

Now, I also want to increase teacher pay so that a lot more people want to go into teaching. The deal I've got to strike with teachers, though—I may not get as much applause on this—[*laughter*]—is I would like to work with teachers and the teachers unions, because I'm a union guy, but I do believe that it's important for the unions to work flexibly with school districts in a consensual fashion to find ways so that if you've got a really excellent teacher, after 15, 20 years, they can get paid a little bit more, right? For—if they're doing a really good job.

And now the flip side—I'm telling you, I'm getting to the point where I'm not going to get applause. If you've got a bad teacher who can't—after given all the support and the training that they need is just not performing up to snuff, we've got to find that person a new job. So—[*applause*].

Just a couple more comments on education generally. A lot of schools still aren't using technology as well as they could in the classroom. And one of the things we're trying to do with the Recovery Act is to help schools get broadband, get computers, but then also train people to use it properly. I think we can do more with technology. Once kids get out of high school, making college affordable is absolutely critical. We have to redesign the college experience so that, not everybody is going to go to school for 4 years right in a row when they're 18. Some people are going to work for 2 years, then go back to school for 2 years once they figure out something they're interested in, go back to work, maybe 5 years down the road, they need to retrain.

We've got to create a pathway for lifelong learning for young people, and not-so-young people, so that all American workers are continually upgrading their skills. So we want to put a lot more emphasis on community colleges and how they are working effectively together.

Let me make a last point because I don't want to—I could talk about this stuff forever. One last point which I always have to remind people of, I said that the biggest ingredient in school performance is the teacher, that's the biggest ingredient within a school. But the single biggest ingredient is the parent. And so this is an example where, people are always trying to say: "Oh, Obama, is he liberal? Is he conservative?" Well, I want Government to do what it should do, but there's some things Government can't do. That's where I'm conservative. Government can't force parents to turn off the TV set and tell your kid to sit down and do their homework. I can't do that. That's not my job; that's your job. Well, it is my job with Sasha and Malia. [*Laughter*] Those two, I'm responsible for.

But the other part of it is, it's not just making sure your kids are doing their homework, it's also instilling a thirst for knowledge and excellence. It's been noted widely that there are a lot of immigrant students who come from very modest backgrounds economically that end up doing very well. And why is that? Well, the difference is, is that in their families and in their communities a lot of times they've got that attitude that used to be prevalent, but sometimes we're losing—sometimes I worry we're losing—and that is, boy, it is a privilege to learn, it's a privilege to discover new things, it's cool to be smart. We want to reward kids for doing well in school.

And the community can help the parents. Listen, I love basketball, but the smartest kid in the school, the National Science Award winner, should be getting as much attention as the basketball star. That's a change that we've got to initiate in our community. So, all right.

Gentleman in the tie there, since he wore a tie. That was really nice of him. We appreciate that. Thank you.

Social Security Reform/Health Care Reform

Q. Hi, my name is Jake Gerrein, and I'm the junior class vice president of Fox High School.

The President. All right.

Q. I was just curious to what policies you're going to put into place in order to protect Social Security for the upcoming generations.

The President. That's a good question. Let me, first of all, a lot of people know this, but I always want to try to explain how Social Security works so that you have a better sense of what we have to do, going forward.

Social Security is not an individual account. When you pay your payroll tax, it doesn't go into—I'm sorry, what was your name? Jay? It doesn't go into Jay's account. Your Social Security tax goes to pay for current retirees. And hopefully when you retire, young people who are working then, their money will go to pay for your retirement.

So it's an intergenerational commitment that we make to each other. What we say is, look, all of us are going to grow old, so we're going to make sure that there's enough money in there for your retirement. And those of us who are currently working, we pay into the kitty to make sure that that happens, and then we expect that the next generation is going to do the same. All right?

Now, here's the problem that we confront, and this is a solvable problem. I've got—there are some problems that are really hard to solve; this is actually one that we can solve. And that is—the problem is that the baby boomers, there were a lot of them, and they're getting older. Even though they deny it, they're getting older. So what's happening is you're getting a big bulge of people who are retiring and you've got fewer workers supporting more retirees. That means you got more money going out, less money coming in, and so you get a mismatch.

Now, what's been happening is, up until very recently, we've been running a surplus in the Social Security account. So there should be enough money, and if we were wise then all that money would be there and then we—we're going to start running a deficit as the baby boomers start retiring, but we would have accumulated all this money and it would—everything would be fine.

But a couple of things have happened. Number one is that the Social Security trust fund, there wasn't a fence around it so people started borrowing out of it for other things. That's not helpful. But the other part of it is, is that there's still going to be a gap if we don't do anything, even if we repay all the money into the trust fund, there's still a gap because there are too many retirees.

So it's not that Social Security would go away, Jay. The problem would be that by the time you retire, you'd be getting 75 cents for every dollar that was promised to you. So you'd get cheated out of a little bit of your Social Security. That's why when people say Social Security is going bankrupt, that's not true. The problem is not that it's going bankrupt; the problem is just that your benefit—it would be the equivalent of a benefit cut of about 25 percent if we don't start making some changes.

Now, there are only a handful of ways to make these changes. Number one, you could just keep on trying to borrow a trillion dollars, or a couple trillion, or however much it takes

from China. But that's not such a good solution, because you'd end up having to pay interest on them. And at some point they're just going to be tired of lending to us because they've got their own senior citizens that they want to take care off.

Second option is to gradually raise the retirement age. Now, I don't think this is the best option just because we just talked to an auto worker over here; that's hard work. And if people's—if the retirement age is already 67, and now you want to get it up to 68 or 69, if you're working on an assembly line, and you've been doing that for 50 years, or 40 years, that's some tough stuff. If you're a Senator, you can work until, you know—[*laughter*]—but if you're doing real work—[*laughter*]—now that's—except for Claire. Claire does some real work. Claire is a hard worker.

You could cut benefits. You could raise the tax on everybody, so everybody's payroll tax goes up a little bit. Or you can do what I think is probably the best solution, which is you can raise the cap on the payroll tax.

Now, let me explain one last point about this. Whether you are Bill Gates or you are Jay, junior at Fox High School, you pay the same rate on your payroll tax, but what happens is, is that it gets capped out at $102,000. Now, the majority of people here—for almost everybody here, what that means is, is that you pay a payroll tax on every dime that you earn. But if you're Bill Gates, that means you're only paying payroll tax on 1/10th of 1 percent of what you earn, because you earn so much more. One hundred thousand dollars, that's just the first fraction of what you earn, and then you stop paying it.

So what I've said is, look, for wealthier people why don't we raise the cap? Make them pay a little more payroll tax. Not everybody is wild about this idea, not surprisingly. And so what I would like to do—I had a fiscal responsibility summit where I brought together Republicans, Democrats, experts on all these issues; how do we start dealing with our long-term deficits, our long-term debt. I actually think that we could get all those folks together, and we could come up with a solution that would ensure stability of the Social Security system for a long, long time to come.

Let me just make this last point though. The big problem we have with entitlements is not Social Security, it's Medicare. Medicare and Medicaid, the two health care programs that the Federal Government helps support, those are the things that are really breaking the bank.

I know you've been hearing all these arguments about, "Oh, Obama is just spending crazy, look at these huge trillion-dollar deficits, blah, blah, blah." Well, let me make a point. Number one, we inherited a $1.3 trillion deficit. That wasn't from my—that wasn't me; that wasn't me. Number two, there is almost uniform consensus among economists that in the middle of the biggest crisis—financial crisis since the Great Depression, we had to take extraordinary steps. So you've got a lot of Republican economists who agree that we had to do a stimulus package, and we had to do something about the banks. Those are one-time charges, and they're big, and they'll make our deficits go up over the next 2 years. But those aren't the problem that we face long term.

What we face long term, the biggest problem we have is that Medicare and Medicaid—health care costs are sky-rocketing, and at the same time as the population is getting older, which means we're using more health care. You combine those two things, and if we aren't careful, health care will consume so much of our budget that ultimately we won't be able to do anything else. We won't be able to provide financial assistance to students; we won't be able to help build green energy; we won't be able to help industries that get into trouble; we won't have a National Park System; we won't be able to do what we're supposed to do on our veterans. Everything else will be pushed aside because of Medicare and Medicaid. That's the problem that we really confront. That's why I've said we've got to have health reform this year to drive down costs and make health care affordable for American families, businesses, and for our Government.

So when you see, those of you who are watching certain news channels that—on which I'm not very popular, and you see folks waving tea bags around—[*laughter*]—let me just remind them that I am happy to have a serious conversation about how we are going to cut our

health care costs down over the long term, how we're going to stabilize Social Security. Claire and I are working diligently to do basically a thorough audit of Federal spending. But let's not play games and pretend that the reason is because of the Recovery Act, because that's just a fraction of the overall problem that we've got.

We are going to have to tighten our belts, but we're going to have to do it in an intelligent way, and we've got to make sure that the people who are helped are working American families. And we're not suddenly saying that the way to do this is to eliminate programs that help ordinary people and give more tax cuts to the wealthy. We tried that formula for 8 years. It did not work, and I don't intend to go back to it.

All right, it's a young lady's turn. It's your turn? [*Laughter*] No, I'm going to call on her. I might call on you later, though.

All right, go ahead.

Alternative Medicine/Health Care Reform

Q. My name's Mary Wallace, I'm a licensed acupuncturist and licensed massage therapist in Florissant. And so——

The President. I could use one right now. My back's stiff. I've been working hard.

Q. I'll be happy to help you. And this kind of fits into what you were just talking about as far as health care. I'm wondering, as a practitioner of Oriental medicine, knowing that the National Institutes of Health and the World Health Organization has discovered through their studies that alternative medicine often is more cost-effective and very effective, how will alternative medicine fit in your new health care program?

The President. Well, look, my attitude is that we should do what works. So I think it is pretty well documented through scientific studies that acupuncture, for example, can be very helpful in relieving certain things like migraines and other ailments, or at least as effective as more intrusive interventions.

I will let the science guide me. We just swore in an outstanding new Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius, former Governor of Kansas. It's good to see that a Jay Hawk got applause on this side of the border here. But she's going to do an outstanding job. And my charge to her is, as we're going through health care reform, let's find out what works.

I think one basic principle that we know is that the more we do on the prevention side, the more we can obtain serious savings down the road. So giving children early checkups, making sure that they get immunized, making sure that they are diagnosed if they've got eyesight problems, making sure that they're taught proper nutrition to avoid a life of obesity, those are all issues that we have some control over. And if we're making those investments, we will save huge amounts of money in the long term.

Unfortunately, the hardest thing to do in politics—and certainly in health care reform—has been to get policymakers to make investments early that will have long-term payoffs. Because people, their attitude is: "Well, I'll be out of office by the time that kid grows up, and the fact that they're healthy, that doesn't help me." And in the private sector insurance system, oftentimes insurers make the same calculation. Their attitude is: "Well, people change jobs enough for us to pay for the preventive medicine now when the problem may not crop up for another 20 years and they'll be long out of our system, so we don't want to reimburse it because it will make things more costly." That's the logic of our health care system that we're going to have to change.

The recovery package put a huge amount in prevention. We are, in our budget, calling for significant increases in prevention. And my hope is, is that working in a bipartisan fashion, we are going to be able to get a health care reform bill on my desk before the end of the year that will start seeing the kinds of investments that will make everybody healthier. All right?

Okay, it's a man's turn. Let me—it's a guy's turn, it's a guy's turn. This gentleman right here, he raised his hand. Go ahead. Yes, sir—hold on, wait for your—now, are you an elected official, by the way?

U.S. Foreign Policy/Foreign Aid

Q. No, sir.

The President. Okay, good. Because elected officials, you guys can't hog the mike right now.

Q. No, sir. I'm a pastor——

The President. Oh, God bless you.

Q. ——Mt. Zion Baptist Church in the City of St. Louis. My question has to do with foreign policy.

The President. Yes, sir.

Q. While we spend so much money with Afghanistan and in other parts of the world, fighting and what have you, in the continent of Africa—Sudan, Darfur, and other places—the poverty level is so high, so many people are dying. Is there a chance in your administration that we would be able to build in that area?

The President. Well, it's a good question. Let me, first of all, say that whatever arguments we had about Iraq, I think we've been able to build a consensus that it is time for us to bring our troops home and give responsibility over to the Iraqis.

We are doing it in a careful way, because we don't want the country to collapse, that would not be in our strategic interests. There's been recent flare-ups of violence in Iraq that are highly sensationalized, and that indicates the degree to which this is a ramp-down that is conducted over the course of 18 months. I think that's the right thing to do.

In Afghanistan and neighboring Pakistan, we do have real problems with the Taliban and Al Qaida. They are the single most direct threat to our national security interests. And I had some grumblings and complaints from certain factions in the Democratic Party when I made a decision to send 17,000 additional troops there. I understand people's concerns. But as Commander in Chief, it is my responsibility to make sure that bin Laden and his cronies are not able to create a safe heaven—haven within which they can kill another 3,000 Americans or more. That's an obligation that I have.

Now, having said that, both on Iraq and Afghanistan, I think we're doing the right thing. I think it's difficult. It's going to require a new strategy that mixes not just military action, but also includes diplomacy and development. We can't neglect these other parts of the world. So I've appointed a special envoy, a Major General Scott Gration, a very close friend of mine, was one of the top fighter pilots in our military, in our Armed Forces, and somebody who's also an expert on development issues. He just returned from Sudan. We are trying to find a way to create peace and stability that will allow the kind of humanitarian assistance that's needed to take effect in that country.

But you're making a broader point, which is there are a lot of countries, not just in Africa, but in Asia and Eastern Europe, et cetera, that need our help. And sometimes people ask me, "Why should we help other countries when we've got so much to do here at home?" I mean, foreign aid is very unpopular. I'm telling you, it's probably the single most unpopular thing. If you just ask the average American, they'll say, "Why should we be giving money to other countries?" And people usually grossly overestimate how much our foreign aid budget is. If you ask people, they'll say, "Well, we give 10 percent of our Federal budget away in foreign aid." Actually, it's 1 percent. We give less in foreign aid than any other wealthy country as a percentage of our GDP.

Here's the reason why it's important. The reason why it's important is that a lot of times we can advance our national interests more effectively by showing that we are interested in the well-being of the people of other countries. That makes those countries more predisposed to work with us on a whole range of issues that are very important to us. It's an important tool for us to be able to meet our national security interests.

So for example—let me just give you one very specific example. If in Latin America, where I just returned, people see that we are sending doctors and teachers and Peace Corps workers into these communities, that that's the face of America. When it comes time for them to help us on drug interdiction, it's a lot easier for the president of a Colombia or a Mexico to ally themselves with us because we're known to the Mexican people or the Colombian people as good friends, as people who care about them. And that may actually then, ultimately, save us money in the long term because we don't end

up having to send troops in and do some things ourselves, because we've got allies to work with us.

So not only is it the right thing to do from a ethical and moral perspective, but it is also good strategy. And so I've said to the Congress, even in these difficult times, we need to do some additional work in terms of foreign assistance, because it will save money for us and lives—blood and treasure—for us in the long term.

I mean, right now everybody is concerned about the swine flu, and properly so. This is a potentially serious issue, and we've got to monitor it very carefully. But think about it: If Mexico has a good strong public health system that is catching these things early, ultimately, that's going to save us money, because flu gets contained. And a lot of the threats that we're going to be facing, whether it's international terrorism, cyber terrorism, nuclear proliferation, pandemic, climate change, a lot of these issues, they cross borders. So it's not like we can just draw a moat around America, and say, "I'm sorry, don't bother us; keep your problems outside." It just doesn't work that way.

People get on planes from Africa, and will bring a disease right here to our doorstep, because we weren't concerned about whether or not they had a public health system that could catch these diseases early. So this is all part of our interests, and not just other people's. All right. Okay.

I was told that I have time for one more question. I want to—I'm sorry guys, but I'm going to go with a student, because young people, this is their school. But I want a young lady, because it's a young lady's turn. This young lady right here, this is the one, the one with the lei on here.

All right, there you go. She looks ready with a good question.

Environment/Alternative Energy Sources

Q. It's an honor to meet you, President Obama.

The President. Thank you so much. What is your name?

Q. My name is Laurel Bonebreak, and I'm a fourth grader. I was curious, how is your administration planning to be more environmentally friendly?

The President. Well, that is just a great question. That is—you're a very poised and articulate fourth grader. Yes, isn't she impressive? Yes, absolutely. We might have to run you for President some day.

Well, there are some short-term things we can do, and there are some long-term things we can do. On the short-term list, we already, for example, passed a historic public lands bill that creates many more acres of public space that is environmentally protected from logging and from other—from mining and from other uses. And that I think is going to be very important.

Now, in some cases what we do is we balance the need for economic growth, but we do it in a sustainable way. There doesn't have to be a contradiction between jobs and the environment. We just have to be thinking a little smarter. And so, for example, when it comes to forestry, there's nothing wrong with us cutting down some trees for timber, as long as you make sure that it's done in a sequence and is spaced properly so that the forest itself is sustained.

Sometimes these debates become this all-or-nothing thing: Either commercial interests can do anything they want, dump stuff in the oceans and tear down all the forests, and that's the only way we can get economic growth; or alternatively, everybody is hugging trees and you can't cut a tree. You know, there's a balance that can be struck, and the key principle is sustainability. Are what we are doing—will it ensure that you have this incredible treasure we call America when you grow up, for your kids, so you can take them into a park, so sportsmen or fishermen can enjoy it. That's the key.

Now, there is a long-term problem that we've got to deal with, and this is a tough one, and that is this issue of climate change. I want to tell you the truth here because this is going to be a debate that we're going to be having over the course of the next year. The average person probably thinks, "Yes, climate change, that's kind of a drag, but it's not one of my top priorities," because you don't really see it or

feel it, it doesn't hit your pocketbook, it doesn't have to do with your job directly. And so the tendency is just to kind of push it off. People think, "Well, this just has to do with polar bears, and I feel bad about polar bears, but I've got other things to worry about."

I don't think people fully appreciate the potential damage—economic damage, as well as environmental damage—that could be done if we are not serious in dealing with this problem. If the temperature goes up a couple of degrees, well, it will change weather patterns pretty significantly. It could create droughts in places where we haven't had drought. It could bring insect-born diseases up into places like Missouri that we haven't seen before. But we can probably manage. If the temperature of the planet goes up 5 degrees, you're now looking at coastlines underwater. You're now looking at huge, cataclysmic hurricanes, complete changes in weather patterns. Some places will get hotter; some places will get colder. Our economy would be disrupted by tens of trillions of dollars.

So this is no joke. And the science shows that the planet is getting warmer faster than people expected. Even the most dire warnings, it's gotten faster—it's moved forward faster than anybody expected. They're talking about, just in a few years, during the summer, there won't be any ice in the Arctic, something we have never seen before. So we have to do something about it.

Now, the question, again, is how do you do it in an intelligent way? There are some people who would say, this is such a big problem that you just got to shut everything down. Well, I'm sorry, that's not going to happen. People got to go to work, and we've got to drive. We've got to fly places. Our economy has to grow.

But there are ways that we can do it that are intelligent and smart. And I think one of the best ways to do it is to say, in a gradual way, let's set a cap, a ceiling, on the carbon pollution that comes out of all sorts of places: our utilities, our cars, our industries. Let's take a look at all the carbon that's being sent into the atmosphere that's causing climate change, and let's say that each year we're going to reduce the allowable amount in total that is released.

And what we'll do to each industry is we'll say we're going to make a deal with you: Come up with ways to improve your processes that—and bring pollution down, and you can make money by sending out less pollution. On the other hand, if you have more pollution than you were allowed, then you're going to have to pay money. You start creating a market for the clean energy, and you start making it more—less economical to produce harmful energy.

Now, if we do that in a smart, gradual way and in a way that protects consumers from the initial attempts of utilities, for example, to pass on those costs to consumers—which is what they'll try to do, so we've got to rebate some of that money to make sure that people are held harmless—then I actually think that we can get control of this problem. We can save the polar bears, but more importantly, we can make sure that we are preserving our economy.

And here is the great opportunity. Everybody knows that we're going to have to do this. The country that gets there fastest, the country that's the first one to figure out really good battery technology for a plug-in hybrid car, the first country that perfects wind power and solar power and knows how to get it from one place to another in an efficient way, that country will dominate the economy of the 21st century the same way that America dominated the 20th century. I want that to be America. That's what we're fighting for.

All right, everybody, I had a good time. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. in Fox Senior High School. In his remarks, he referred to Linda Pleimann, hairdresser, who introduced the President; Gov. Jeremiah W. "Jay" Nixon, Secretary of State Robin Carnahan, State Attorney General Chris Koster, State Treasurer Clint Zweifel, and State Auditor Susan Montee of Missouri; Dianne Brown, superintendent, Fox C–6 school district; 2009 National Teacher of the Year Anthony J. Mullen; William H. Gates III, chairman, Microsoft; Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; and U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan Maj. Gen. J. Scott Gration, USAF (Ret.).

The President's News Conference
April 29, 2009

The President. Please be seated. Before we begin tonight, I just want to provide everyone with a few brief updates on some of the challenges we're dealing with right now.

First, we are continuing to closely monitor the emergency cases of the H1N1 flu virus throughout the United States. As I said this morning, this is obviously a very serious situation, and every American should know that their entire Government is taking the utmost precautions and preparations. Our public health officials have recommended that schools with confirmed or suspected cases of this flu strongly consider temporarily closing. And if more schools are forced to close, we've recommended that both parents and businesses think about contingency plans if their children do have to stay home.

I've requested an immediate $1.5 billion in emergency funding from Congress to support our ability to monitor and track this virus and to build our supply of antiviral drugs and other equipment, and we will also ensure that those materials get to where they need to be as quickly as possible.

And finally, I've asked every American to take the same steps you would take to prevent any other flu: Keep your hands washed; cover your mouth when you cough; stay home from work if you're sick; and keep your children home from school if they're sick.

We'll continue to provide regular updates to the American people as we receive more information, and everyone should rest assured that this Government is prepared to do whatever it takes to control the impact of this virus.

The second thing I'd like to mention is how gratified I am that the House and the Senate passed a budget resolution today that will serve as an economic blueprint for this Nation's future. I especially want to thank Leader Reid, Speaker Pelosi, all the Members of Congress who worked so quickly and effectively to make this blueprint a reality.

This budget builds on the steps we've taken over the last 100 days to move this economy from recession to recovery and, ultimately, to prosperity. We began by passing a Recovery Act that has already saved or created over 150,000 jobs and provided a tax cut to 95 percent of all working families. We passed a law to provide and protect health insurance for 11 million American children whose parents work full time. And we launched a housing plan that has already contributed to a spike in the number of homeowners who are refinancing their mortgages, which is the equivalent of another tax cut.

But even as we clear away the wreckage of this recession, I've also said that we can't go back to an economy that's built on a pile of sand, on inflated home prices and maxed-out credit cards, on overleveraged banks and outdated regulations that allow recklessness of a few to threaten the prosperity of all.

We have to lay a new foundation for growth, a foundation that will strengthen our economy and help us compete in the 21st century. And that's exactly what this budget begins to do. It contains new investments in education that will equip our workers with the right skills and training, new investments in renewable energy that will create millions of jobs and new industries, new investments in health care that will cut costs for families and businesses, and new savings that will bring down our deficit.

I also campaigned on the promise that I would change the direction of our Nation's foreign policy, and we've begun to do that as well. We've begun to end the war in Iraq, and we forged with our NATO allies a new strategy to target Al Qaida in Afghanistan and Pakistan. We have rejected the false choice between our security and our ideals by closing the detention center at Guantanamo Bay and banning torture without exception. And we've renewed our diplomatic efforts to deal with challenges ranging from the global economic crisis to the spread of nuclear weapons.

So I think we're off to a good start, but it's just a start. I'm proud of what we've achieved, but I'm not content. I'm pleased with our progress, but I'm not satisfied. Millions of Americans are still without jobs and homes,

and more will be lost before this recession is over. Credit is still not flowing nearly as freely as it should. Countless families and communities touched by our auto industry still face tough times ahead. Our projected long-term deficits are still too high. And Government is still not as efficient as it needs to be. We still confront threats ranging from terrorism to nuclear proliferation as well as pandemic flu. And all this means you can expect an unrelenting, unyielding effort from this administration to strengthen our prosperity and our security in the second 100 days and the third 100 days and all the days after that.

You can expect us to work on health care reform that will bring down costs while maintaining quality, as well as energy legislation that will spark a clean energy revolution. I expect to sign legislation by the end of this year that sets new rules of the road for Wall Street, rules that reward drive and innovation as opposed to shortcuts and abuse. And we will also work to pass legislation that protects credit card users from unfair rate hikes and abusive fees and penalties. We'll continue scouring the Federal budget for savings and target more programs for elimination, and we will continue to pursue procurement reform that will greatly reduce the no-bid contracts that have wasted so many taxpayer dollars.

So we have a lot of work left to do. It's work that will take time, and it will take effort. But the United States of America, I believe, will see a better day. We will rebuild a stronger nation, and we will endure as a beacon for all those weary travelers beyond our shores who still dream that there's a place where all this is possible.

I want to thank the American people for their support and their patience during these trying times, and I look forward to working with you in the next 100 days and the 100 days after that, all the hundreds of days to follow, to make sure that this country is what it can be.

And with that, I will start taking some questions, and I'll start with you, Jennifer [Jennifer Loven, Associated Press].

Global Influenza Outbreak

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. With the flu outbreak spreading and worsening, can you talk about whether you think it's time to close the border with Mexico, and whether—under what conditions you might consider quarantining, when that might be appropriate?

The President. Well, first of all, as I said, this is a cause for deep concern but not panic. And I think that we have to make sure that we recognize that how we respond—intelligently, systematically, based on science and what public health officials have to say—will determine in large part what happens.

I've consulted with our public health officials extensively on a day-to-day basis, in some cases, an hour-to-hour basis. At this point, they have not recommended a border closing. From their perspective it would be akin to closing the barn door after the horses are out, because we already have cases here in the United States. We have ramped up screening efforts as well as made sure that additional supplies are there on the border so that we can prepare in the eventuality that we have to do more than we're doing currently.

But the most important thing right now that public health officials have indicated is that we treat this the same way that we would treat other flu outbreaks, just understanding that because this is a new strain we don't yet know how it will respond. So we have to take additional precautions, essentially, take out some additional insurance. Now, that's why I asked for an additional $1.5 billion, so that we can make sure that everything is in place should a worst-case scenario play out.

I do want to compliment Democrats and Republicans who worked diligently back in 2005 when the bird flu came up. I was part of a group of legislators who worked with the Bush administration to make sure that we had beefed up our infrastructure and our stockpiles of antiviral drugs like Tamiflu. And I think the Bush administration did a good job of creating the infrastructure so that we can respond. For example, we've got 50 million courses of antiviral drugs in the event that they're needed.

So the Government is going to be doing everything that we can. We're coordinating closely with State and local officials. Secretary Napolitano at Department of Homeland Security, newly installed Secretary Sebelius of Health and Human Services, our Acting CDC Director, they are all on the phone on a daily basis with all public health officials across the States to coordinate and make sure that there's timely reporting, that if as new cases come up that we are able to track them effectively, that we're allocating resources so that they're in place.

The key now, I think, is to make sure that we are maintaining great vigilance, that everybody responds appropriately when cases do come up, and individual families start taking very sensible precautions that can make a huge difference. So wash your hands when you shake hands. Cover your mouth when you cough. I know it sounds trivial, but it makes a huge difference. If you are sick, stay home. If your child is sick, keep them out of school. If you are feeling certain flu symptoms, don't get on an airplane. Don't get on any system of public transportation where you're confined and you could potentially spread the virus.

So those are the steps that I think we need to take right now. But understand that because this is a new strain, we have to be cautious. If this was a strain that we were familiar with, then we might have to—then I think we wouldn't see the kind of alert levels that we're seeing, for example, with the World Health Organization. Okay?

Deb Price of Detroit News. Where's Deb? Good to see you.

U.S. Auto Industry

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. On the domestic auto industry, have you determined that bankruptcy is the only option to restructure Chrysler? And do you believe that the deep cuts and plant closings that were outlined this week by General Motors are sufficient?

The President. Let me speak to Chrysler first, because the clock is ticking on Chrysler coming up with a plan. I am actually very hopeful, more hopeful than I was 30 days ago, that we can see a resolution that maintains a viable Chrysler auto company out there. What we've seen is, the unions have made enormous sacrifices, on top of sacrifices that they had previously made. You've now seen the major debtholders come up with a set of potential concessions that they can live with. All that promises the possibility that you can get a Fiat-Chrysler merger and that you have an ongoing concern. The details have not yet been finalized so I don't want to jump the gun, but I'm feeling more optimistic than I was about the possibilities of that getting done.

With respect to GM, we're going to have another 30 days. They're still in the process of presenting us with their plans. But I've always said that GM has a lot of good product there, and if they can get through these difficult times and engage in some of the very difficult choices that they've already made, that they can emerge a strong, competitive, viable company.

And that's my goal in this whole process. I would love to get the U.S. Government out of the auto industry—auto business as quickly as possible. We have a circumstance in which a bad recession compounded some great weaknesses already in the auto industry. And it was my obligation, and continues to be my obligation, to make sure that any taxpayer dollars that are in place to support the auto industry are aimed not at short-term fixes that continue these companies as wards of the state, but rather institutes the kind of restructuring that allows them to be strongly competitive in the future. I think we're moving in that direction.

The last point, you asked about Chrysler bankruptcy. It was the prudent and appropriate thing for Chrysler to do to engage in the filings that they—that received some notice a while back, because they had to prepare for possible contingencies. It's not yet clear that they're going to have to use it. The fact that the major debtholders appear ready to make concessions means that even if they ended up having to go through some sort of bankruptcy, it would be a very quick type of bankruptcy, and they could continue operating and emerge on the other side in a much stronger position.

So my goal is to make sure that we've got a strong, viable, competitive auto industry. I think some tough choices are being made. There's no denying that there's significant hardship involved, particularly for the workers and the families in these communities, and we're going to be coming behind whatever plan is in place to make sure that the Federal Government is providing as much assistance as we have to ensure that people are landing back on their feet, even as we strengthen these core businesses. Okay?

Jake [Jake Tapper, ABC News]. Where's Jake? There he is.

Terrorist Interrogation Procedures

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You've said in the past that waterboarding, in your opinion, is torture. And torture is a violation of international law and the Geneva Conventions. Do you believe that the previous administration sanctioned torture?

The President. What I've said, and I will repeat, is that waterboarding violates our ideals and our values. I do believe that it is torture. I don't think that's just my opinion; that's the opinion of many who have examined the topic. And that's why I put an end to these practices. I am absolutely convinced it was the right thing to do, not because there might not have been information that was yielded by these various detainees who were subjected to this treatment, but because we could have gotten this information in other ways, in ways that were consistent with our values, in ways that were consistent with who we are.

I was struck by an article that I was reading the other day talking about the fact that the British during World War II, when London was being bombed to smithereens, had 200 or so detainees. And Churchill said, "We don't torture," when the entire British—all of the British people were being subjected to unimaginable risk and threat. And the reason was that Churchill understood, you start taking shortcuts, and over time, that corrodes what's best in a people; it corrodes the character of a country.

And so I strongly believe that the steps that we've taken to prevent these kinds of enhanced interrogation techniques will make us stronger over the long term and make us safer over the long term, because it will put us in a position where we can still get information. In some cases, it may be harder, but part of what makes us, I think, still a beacon to the world is that we are willing to hold true to our ideals even when it's hard, not just when it's easy.

At the same time, it takes away a critical recruitment tool that Al Qaida and other terrorist organizations have used to try to demonize the United States and justify the killing of civilians. And it makes us—it puts us in a much stronger position to work with our allies in the kind of international coordinated intelligence activity that can shut down these networks.

So this is a decision that I am very comfortable with. And I think the American people, over time, will recognize that it is better for us to stick to who we are, even when we're taking on a unscrupulous enemy.

Okay. I'm sorry.

Q. Sir, I'm sorry. Do you believe that the previous administration sanctioned torture?

The President. I believe that waterboarding was torture. And I think that the—whatever legal rationales were used, it was a mistake.

Mark Knoller [CBS Radio].

Q. Thank you, sir. Let me follow up, if I may, on Jake's question. Did you read the documents recently referred to by former Vice President Cheney and others, saying that the use of so-called enhanced interrogation techniques not only protected the Nation, but saved lives? And if part of the United States were under imminent threat, could you envision yourself ever authorizing the use of those enhanced interrogation techniques?

The President. I have read the documents. Now, they haven't been officially declassified and released, and so I don't want to go into the details of them. But here's what I can tell you: That the public reports and the public justifications for these techniques—which is that we got information from these individuals that were subjected to these techniques—doesn't answer the core question, which is, could we have gotten that same information without resorting to these techniques? And it doesn't answer the broader question: Are we safer as a consequence of having used these techniques?

So when I made the decision to release these memos and when I made the decision to bar these practices, this was based on consultation with my entire national security team and based on my understanding that, ultimately, I will be judged as Commander in Chief on how safe I'm keeping the American people. That's the responsibility I wake up with, and it's the responsibility I go to sleep with.

And so I will do whatever is required to keep the American people safe, but I am absolutely convinced that the best way I can do that is to make sure that we are not taking shortcuts that undermine who we are. And there have been no circumstances during the course of this first 100 days in which I have seen information that would make me second-guess the decision that I've made. Okay?

Chuck Todd [NBC News].

Pakistan

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I want to move to Pakistan. Pakistan appears to be at war with the Taliban inside their own country. Can you reassure the American people that, if necessary, America could secure Pakistan's nuclear arsenal and keep it from getting into the Taliban's hands or, worst-case scenario, even Al Qaida's hands?

The President. I'm confident that we can make sure that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is secure, primarily, initially, because the Pakistani army, I think, recognizes the hazards of those weapons falling into the wrong hands. We've got strong military-to-military consultation and cooperation. I am gravely concerned about the situation in Pakistan not because I think that they're immediately going to be overrun and the Taliban would take over in Pakistan; more concerned that the civilian Government there right now is very fragile and don't seem to have the capacity to deliver basic services: schools, health care, rule of law, a judicial system that works for the majority of people. And so as a consequence, it is very difficult for them to gain the support and the loyalty of their people.

So we need to help Pakistan help Pakistanis. And I think that there's a recognition increasingly on the part of both the civilian Government there and the army that that is their biggest weakness.

On the military side, you're starting to see some recognition just in the last few days that the obsession with India as the mortal threat to Pakistan has been misguided, and that their biggest threat right now comes internally. And you're starting to see the Pakistan military take much more seriously the armed threat from militant extremists.

We want to continue to encourage Pakistan to move in that direction, and we will provide them all the cooperation that we can. We want to respect their sovereignty, but we also recognize that we have huge strategic interests, huge national security interests in making sure that Pakistan is stable, and that you don't end up having a nuclear armed militant state.

Q. But in a worst-case scenario——

The President. I'm not going to engage——

Q. ——military, U.S. military could secure this nuclear arsenal?

The President. I'm not going to engage in hypotheticals of that sort. I feel confident that that nuclear arsenal will remain out of militant hands. Okay?

Jeff Mason [Reuters].

Iraq

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. One of the biggest changes you've made in the first 100 days regarding foreign policy has had to do with Iraq. But due to the large scale—this large-scale violence there right now, does that affect the U.S. strategy at all for withdrawal, and could it affect the timetable that you've set out for troops?

The President. Well, first of all, I think it's important to note that although you've seen some spectacular bombings in Iraq that are a legitimate cause of concern, civilian deaths, incidents of bombings, et cetera, remain very low relative to what was going on last year, for example. And so you haven't seen the kinds of huge spikes that you were seeing for a time. The political system is holding and functioning in Iraq.

Part of the reason why I called for a gradual withdrawal as opposed to a precipitous one was precisely because more work needs to be

done on the political side to further isolate whatever remnants of Al Qaida in Iraq still exist. And I'm very confident that with our commander on the ground, General Odierno, with Chris Hill, our new Ambassador having been approved and already getting his team in place, that they are going to be able to work effectively with the Maliki Government to create the conditions for an ultimate transfer after the national elections.

But there's some serious work to do on making sure that how they divvy up oil revenues is ultimately settled; what the Provincial powers are and boundaries; the relationship between the Kurds and the central Government; the relationship between the Shi'a and the Kurds; are they incorporating effectively Sunnis, Sons of Iraq into the structure of the armed forces in a way that's equitable and just. Those are all issues that have not been settled the way they need to be settled. And what we've done is we've provided sufficient time for them to get that work done. But we've got to keep the pressure up, not just on the military side, but on the diplomatic and development sides as well.

Chip Reid [CBS News].

Senator Arlen Specter/Cooperation With Congress

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. On Senator Specter's switch to the Democratic Party, you said you were thrilled. I guess nobody should be surprised about that. But how big a deal is this, really? Some Republicans say it is huge. They believe it's a game-changer. They say that if you get the 60 votes in the Senate, that you will be able to ride roughshod over any opposition, and that we're on the verge of, as one Republican put it, "one-party rule." Do you see it that way? And also, what do you think his switch says about the state of the Republican Party?

The President. Well, first of all, I think very highly of Arlen Specter. I think he's got a record of legislative accomplishment that is as good as any Member of the Senate. And I think he's always had a strong independent streak. I think that was true when he was a Republican; I think that will be true when he's a Democrat. He was very blunt in saying I couldn't count on him to march lockstep on every single issue. And so he's going to still have strong opinions, as many Democrats in the Senate do. I've been there. It turns out, all the Senators have very strong opinions, and I don't think that's going to change.

I do think that having Arlen Specter in the Democratic caucus will liberate him to cooperate on critical issues like health care, like infrastructure and job creation, areas where his inclinations were to work with us, but he was feeling pressure not to. And I think the vote on the Recovery Act was a classic example. Ultimately, he thought that was the right thing to do, and he was fiercely berated within his own party at the time for having taken what I considered to be a very sensible step. So I think it's overall a positive.

Now, I am under no illusions that suddenly I'm going to have a rubber-stamp Senate. I've got Democrats who don't agree with me on everything, and that's how it should be. Congress is a coequal branch of Government. Every Senator who's there, whether I agree with them or disagree with them, I think, truly believes that they are doing their absolute best to represent their constituencies. And we've got regional differences, and we've got some parts of the country that are affected differently by certain policies, and those have to be respected, and there's going to have to be compromise and give-and-take on all of these issues.

I do think that, to my Republican friends, I want them to realize that me reaching out to them has been genuine. I can't sort of define bipartisanship as simply being willing to accept certain theories of theirs that we tried for 8 years and didn't work and the American people voted to change. But there are a whole host of areas where we can work together.

And I've said this to people like Mitch McConnell. I said, look, on health care reform, you may not agree with me that I—we should have a public plan; that may be philosophically just too much for you to swallow. On the other hand, there are some areas, like reducing the cost of medical malpractice insurance, where you do agree with me. If I'm taking some of your ideas—and giving you credit for good ideas—the fact that you didn't get a hundred percent can't be a reason every single time to

oppose my position. And if that is how bipartisanship is defined—a situation in which, basically, wherever there are philosophical differences I have to simply go along with ideas that have been rejected by the American people in a historic election—we're probably not going to make progress.

If, on the other hand, the definition is that we're open to each other's ideas, there are going to be some differences, the majority will probably be determinative when it comes to resolving just hard-core differences that we can't resolve, but there's a whole host of other areas where we can work together, then I think we can make progress.

U.S. Political System

Q. Is the Republican Party in the desperate straits that Arlen Specter seems to think it is?

The President. You know, politics in America changes very quick, and I'm a big believer that things are never as good as they seem and never as bad as they seem. You're talking to a guy who was 30 points down in the polls during a primary in Iowa, so I never—I don't believe in crystal balls. I do think that our administration has taken some steps that have restored confidence in the American people that we're moving in the right direction, and that simply opposing our approach on every front is probably not a good political strategy.

Ed Henry [Cable News Network].

Abortion Rights

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. In a couple of weeks you're going to be giving the commencement at Notre Dame and, as you know, this has caused a lot of controversy among Catholics who are opposed to your position on abortion. As a candidate you vowed that one of the very first things you wanted to do was sign the freedom of choice act, which, as you know, would eliminate Federal, State, and local restrictions on abortion. And at one point in the campaign, when asked about abortion and life, you said that it was above—quote, "above my pay grade." Now that you've been President for a hundred days, obviously, your pay grade is a little higher than when you were a Senator—[*laughter*]—do you still hope that Congress quickly sends you the freedom of choice act so you can sign it?

The President. You know, the—my view on abortion, I think, has been very consistent. I think abortion is a moral issue and an ethical issue. I think that those who are pro-choice make a mistake when they—if they suggest—and I don't want to create straw men here, but I think there are some who suggest that this is simply an issue about women's freedom, and that there's no other considerations. I think, look, this is an issue that people have to wrestle with and families and individual women have to wrestle with.

The reason I'm pro-choice is because I don't think women take that issue—that position casually. I think that they struggle with these decisions each and every day, and I think they are in a better position to make these decisions, ultimately, than Members of Congress or a President of the United States, in consultation with their families, with their doctors, with their clergy. So that's been my consistent position.

The other thing that I said consistently during the campaign is, I would like to reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies that result in women feeling compelled to get an abortion or at least considering getting an abortion, particularly if we can reduce the number of teen pregnancies, which has started to spike up again. And so I've got a task force within the Domestic Policy Council in the West Wing of the White House that is working with groups both in the pro-choice camp and in the pro-life camp to see if we can arrive at some consensus on that.

Now, the freedom of choice act is not my highest legislative priority. I believe that women should have the right to choose, but I think that the most important thing we can do to tamp down some of the anger surrounding this issue is to focus on those areas that we can agree on. And that's where I'm going to focus.

Jeff Zeleny [New York Times].

The President's First 100 Days

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. During these first 100 days, what has surprised you the most

about this office, enchanted you the most about serving this in office, humbled you the most, and troubled you the most?

The President. All right, let me write this down. [*Laughter*]

Q. Surprised, troubled——

The President. I've got—what was the first one?

Q. Surprised.

The President. Surprised.

Q. Troubled.

The President. Troubled.

Q. Enchanted.

The President. Enchanted? Nice. [*Laughter*]

Q. And humbled.

The President. And what was the last one, humbled?

Q. Humbled. Thank you, sir.

The President. All right. Okay. [*Laughter*] Surprised—I am surprised compared to where I started, when we first announced for this race, by the number of critical issues that appear to be coming to a head all at the same time. You know, when I first started this race, Iraq was a central issue, but the economy appeared on the surface to still be relatively strong. There were underlying problems that I was seeing with health care for families and our education system and college affordability and so forth, but, obviously, I didn't anticipate the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

And so the typical President, I think, has two or three big problems; we've got seven or eight big problems. And so we've had to move very quickly, and I'm very proud of my team for the fact that we've been able to keep our commitments to the American people to bring about change while, at the same time, managing a whole host of issues that had come up that weren't necessarily envisioned a year and a half ago.

Troubled? I'd say less troubled, but sobered by the fact that change in Washington comes slow, that there is still a certain quotient of political posturing and bickering that takes place even when we're in the middle of really big crises. I would like to think that everybody would say, you know what, let's take a timeout on some of the political games, focus our attention for at least this year, and then we can start running for something next year. And that hasn't happened as much as I would have liked.

Enchanted? [*Laughter*] Enchanted—I will tell you that when I meet our service men and women, enchanted is probably not the word I would use. [*Laughter*] But I am so profoundly impressed and grateful to them for what they do. They're really good at their job. They are willing to make extraordinary sacrifices on our behalf. They do so without complaint. They are fiercely loyal to this country. And the more I interact with our service men and women, from the top brass down to the lowliest private, I'm just—I'm grateful to them.

Humbled by the fact that the Presidency is extraordinarily powerful, but we are just part of a much broader tapestry of American life. And there are a lot of different power centers, and so I can't just press a button and suddenly have the bankers do exactly what I want or turn on a switch and suddenly Congress falls in line. And so what you do is to make your best arguments, listen hard to what other people have to say, and coax folks in the right direction.

This metaphor has been used before, but the ship of state is an ocean liner, it's not a speed boat. And so the way we are constantly thinking about this issue of how to bring about the changes that the American people need is to say, if we can move this big battleship a few degrees in a different direction, we may not see all the consequences of that change a week from now or 3 months from now, but 10 years from now or 20 years from now, our kids will be able to look back and say that was when we started getting serious about clean energy; that's when health care started to become more efficient and affordable; that's when we became serious about raising our standards in education.

And so I have a much longer time horizon than I think you do when you're a candidate or if you're listening, I think, to the media reportage on a day-to-day basis.

And I'm humbled, last, by the American people, who have shown extraordinary patience and, I think, a recognition that we're not going to solve all these problems overnight. Okay?

Lori Montenegro [Telemundo].

Immigration Reform

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, when you met with the Hispanic caucus a few weeks ago, reports came out that the White House was planning to have a forum to talk about immigration and bring it to the forefront. Going forward, my question is, what is your strategy to try to have immigration reform? And are you still on the same timetable to have it accomplished in the first year of your Presidency? And also, I'd like to know if you're going to reach out to Senator John McCain, who is Republican and in the past has favored immigration reform?

The President. Well, we reach out to Senator McCain on a whole host of issues. He has been a leader on immigration reform. I think he has had the right position on immigration reform, and I would love to partner with him and others on what is going to be a critical issue. We've also worked with Senator McCain on what I think is a terrific piece of legislation that he and Carl Levin have put together around procurement reform. We want that moved, and we're going to be working hard with them to get that accomplished.

What I told the congressional Hispanic caucus is exactly what I said the very next day in a town hall meeting and what I will continue to say publically, and that is, we want to move this process. We can't continue with a broken immigration system. It's not good for anybody. It's not good for American workers. It's dangerous for Mexican would-be workers who are trying to cross a dangerous border. It is putting a strain on border communities who oftentimes have to deal with a host of undocumented workers, and it keeps those undocumented workers in the shadows, which means they can be exploited at the same time as they're depressing U.S. wages.

So what I hope to happen is that we're able to convene a working group, working with key legislators, like Luis Gutierrez and Nydia Velazquez and others, to start looking at a framework of how this legislation might be shaped. In the meantime, what we're trying to do is take some core—some key administrative steps to move the process along, to lay the groundwork for legislation, because the American people need some confidence that if we actually put a package together we can execute.

So Janet Napolitano, who has great knowledge of this because of having been a border Governor, she's already in the process of reviewing and figuring out how can we strengthen our border security in a much more significant way than we're doing. If the American people don't feel like you can secure the borders, then it's hard to strike a deal that would get people out of the shadows and on a pathway to citizenship who are already here, because the attitude of the average American is going to be, well, you're just going to have hundreds of thousands of more coming in each year. On the other hand, showing that there's a more thoughtful approach than just raids of a handful of workers, as opposed to, for example, taking seriously the violations of companies that sometimes are actively recruiting these workers to come in, that's, again, something that we can start doing administratively.

So what we want to do is to show that we are competent in getting results around immigration, even on the structures that we already have in place, the laws that we already have in place, so that we're building confidence among the American people that we can actually follow through on whatever legislative approach emerges. Okay?

Q. Do you feel confident that it will get passed in the first year of your administration?

The President. I see the process moving this first year, and I'm going to be moving it as quickly as I can. I've been accused of doing too much. We are moving full steam ahead on all fronts. Ultimately, I don't have control of the legislative calendar. And so we're going to work with legislative leaders to see what we can do.

Andre Showell [Black Entertainment Television]. There you go.

Effect of Economic Situation on Minority Communities

Q. Thank you. Mr. President, as the entire Nation tries to climb out of this deep

recession, in communities of color the circumstances are far worse. The black unemployment rate, as you know, is in the double digits. And in New York City, for example, the black unemployment rate for men is near 50 percent.

My question tonight is, given this unique and desperate circumstance, what specific policies can you point to that will target these communities? And what's a timetable for us to see tangible results?

The President. Well, keep in mind that every step we're taking is designed to help all people. But folks who are most vulnerable are most likely to be helped because they need the most help. So when we passed the Recovery Act, for example, and we put in place provisions that would extend unemployment insurance or allow you to keep your health insurance, even if you've lost your job, that probably disproportionately impacted those communities that had lost their jobs.

And unfortunately, the African American community and Latino community are probably overrepresented in those ranks. When we put in place additional dollars for community health centers to ensure that people are still getting the help that they need, or we expand health insurance to millions more children through the Children's Health Insurance Program, again, those probably disproportionately impact African American and Latino families simply because they're the ones who are most vulnerable. They've got higher rates of uninsured in their communities.

So my general approach is that if the economy is strong, that will lift all boats, as long as it is also supported by, for example, strategies around college affordability and job training, tax cuts for working families as opposed to the wealthiest that level the playing field and ensure bottom-up economic growth. And I'm confident that that will help the African American community live out the American Dream at the same time that it's helping communities all across the country. Okay?

Michael Scherer of Time.

State Secrets Doctrine

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. During the campaign you criticized President Bush's use of the state secrets privilege. But U.S. attorneys have continued to argue the Bush position in three cases in court. How exactly does your view of state secrets differ from President Bush's? And do you believe Presidents should be able to derail entire lawsuits about warrantless wiretapping or rendition, if classified information is involved?

The President. I actually think that the state secret doctrine should be modified. I think right now it's overbroad. But keep in mind, what happens is, we come into office, we're in for a week, and suddenly, we've got a court filing that's coming up. And so we don't have the time to effectively think through what, exactly, should a overarching reform of that doctrine take. We've got to respond to the immediate case in front of us.

I think it is appropriate to say that there are going to be cases in which national security interests are genuinely at stake, and that you can't litigate without revealing covert activities or classified information that would genuinely compromise our safety. But searching for ways to redact, to carve out certain cases, to see what can be done so that a judge in chambers can review information without it being in open court, you know, there should be some additional tools so that it's not such a blunt instrument. And we're interested in pursuing that. I know that Eric Holder and Greg Craig, my White House Counsel, and others are working on that as we speak.

Jonathan Weisman [Wall Street Journal], you get the last word. Where are you? There you are. Yes.

Government Role in U.S. Auto Industry and Banking System

Q. Thank you, sir. You are currently the chief shareholder of a couple of very large mortgage giants. You're about to become the chief shareholder of a car company, probably two. And I'm wondering what kind of shareholder are you going to be? What is the Government's role as the

keeper of public trust in bonds in soon-to-be public companies again? Thank you.

The President. Well, I think our first role should be shareholders that are looking to get out. You know, I don't want to run auto companies; I don't want to run banks. I've got two wars I've got to run already. I've got more than enough to do. [*Laughter*] So the sooner we can get out of that business, the better off we're going to be.

We are in unique circumstances. You had the potential collapse of the financial system, which would have decimated our economy, and so we had to step in. As I've said before, I don't agree with every decision that was made by the previous administration when it came to TARP, but the need for significant intervention was there, and it was appropriate that we moved in.

With respect to the auto companies, I believe that America should have a functioning, competitive auto industry. I don't think that taxpayers should simply put—attach an umbilical cord between the U.S. Treasury and the auto companies so that they are constantly getting subsidies. But I do think that helping them restructure at this unique period when sales—you know, the market has essentially gone from 14 million down to 9 million—I don't think that there's anything inappropriate about that.

My goal on all this is to help these companies make some tough decisions based on realistic assumptions about economic growth, about their market share, about what that market is going to look like, to prevent systemic risk that would affect everybody, and as soon as their situations are stabilized and the economy is less fragile, so that those systemic risks are diminished, to get out, find some private buyers. And——

Q. But would you shape the products and services that are on offer?

The President. I don't think that we should micromanage. But I think that like any investor, the American taxpayer has the right to scrutinize what's being proposed and to make sure that their money is not just being thrown down the drain.

And so we've got to strike a balance. I don't want to be—I'm not an auto engineer, I don't know how to create a affordable, well-designed plug-in hybrid. But I know that if the Japanese can design a affordable, well-designed hybrid, then doggone it, the American people should be able to do the same. So my job is to ask the auto industry, why is it you guys can't do this? And in some cases they're starting to do it, but they've got these legacy costs. There are some terrific U.S. cars being made, both by Chrysler and GM. The question is, you know, give me a plan so that you're building off your strengths and you're projecting out to where that market is going to be.

I actually think, if you look at the trends, that those auto companies that emerge from this crisis, when you start seeing the pent-up demand for autos coming back, they're going to be in a position to really do well globally, not just here in the United States. So I just want to help them get there.

But I want to disabuse people of this notion that somehow we enjoy meddling in the private sector. If you could tell me right now that when I walked into this office that the banks were humming, that the autos were selling, and that all you had to worry about was Iraq, Afghanistan, North Korea, getting health care passed, figuring out how to deal with energy independence, deal with Iran, and a pandemic flu, I would take that deal. [*Laughter*]

And that's why I'm always amused when I hear these criticisms of, "Oh, Obama wants to grow government." No. I would love a nice, lean portfolio to deal with, but that's not the hand that's been dealt us. And every generation has to rise up to the specific challenges that confront them. We happen to have gotten a big set of challenges, but we're not the first generation that that's happened to. And I'm confident that we're going to meet these challenges just like our grandparents and forebears met them before.

All right. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 8:01 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Richard E. Besser, Acting Director, Centers

for Disease Control and Prevention; Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Forces—Iraq; Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq; and Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr.

Remarks on the United States Automobile Industry
April 30, 2009

Hey, guys. I know you haven't seen enough of me lately, so—[*laughter*].

One month ago, I spoke about some of the problems that have led to the crisis in the auto industry and about what would be required to ensure that General Motors and Chrysler emerged from their current troubles stronger and more competitive.

My team will continue working with General Motors as they strengthen their business plan and move towards restructuring that's consistent with the principles that I've laid out. And today, after consulting with my Auto Task Force, I can report that the necessary steps have been taken to give one of America's most storied automakers, Chrysler, a new lease on life.

This is a company that has a particular claim on our American identity. It's a company founded in the early years of the American automobile industry, a company that helped make the 20th century an American Century and that came to embody, along with the two other members of the Big Three, the ingenuity, the industriousness, and the indomitable spirit of the American people.

Chrysler has not only been an icon of America's auto industry and a source of pride for generations of American workers, it's been responsible for helping build our middle class, giving countless Americans the chance to provide for their families, sending their kids to college, saving for a secure retirement. It's what hundreds of thousands of autoworkers and suppliers and dealers and their families rely on to pay their bills in communities across our industrial Midwest and across the country.

It's been a pillar of our industrial economy, but, frankly, a pillar that's been weakened by papering over tough problems and avoiding hard choices. For too long, Chrysler moved too slowly to adapt to the future, designing and building cars that were less popular, less reliable, and less fuel-efficient than foreign competitors. That's part of what has brought us to a point where they sought taxpayer assistance.

But as I've said from the start, we simply cannot keep this company, or any company, afloat on an endless supply of tax dollars. My job as President is to ensure that if tax dollars are being put on the line, they are being invested in a real fix that will make Chrysler more competitive.

That's why I rejected the original restructuring plan that Chrysler offered last month. It was clear that if we put tax dollars in that plan, it would be a bad deal for American taxpayers and would not put the company on a viable path. But it's also clear that if Chrysler was able to form a partnership with the international car company Fiat, there was a chance Chrysler could have a bright future.

After consulting with my Auto Task Force, industry experts, and financial advisers, I decided to give Chrysler and Fiat 30 days to reach an agreement. And the standard I set was high. I challenged them to design a plan that would protect American jobs, American taxpayers, and the future of a great American car company. But over the past month, seemingly insurmountable obstacles have been overcome, and Chrysler's most important stakeholders, from the United Auto Workers to Chrysler's largest lenders, from its own—from its former owners to its suppliers, have agreed to make major sacrifices.

So today I am pleased to announce that Chrysler and Fiat have formed a partnership that has a strong chance of success. It's a partnership that will save more than 30,000 jobs at Chrysler and tens of thousands of jobs at suppliers, dealers, and other businesses that rely on this company.

It's a partnership that the Federal Government will support by making additional loans that are consistent with what I outlined last

month. As part of their agreement, every dime of new taxpayer money will be repaid before Fiat can take a majority ownership stake in Chrysler. In addition, considering Chrysler's extensive operations in Canada, the Government of Canada is also committing resources to ensure that Chrysler has a chance to succeed, and we're working closely with them.

It's a partnership that will give Chrysler a chance not only to survive, but to thrive in a global auto industry. Fiat has demonstrated that it can build the clean, fuel-efficient cars that are the future of the industry, and as part of this agreement, Fiat has already agreed to transfer billions of dollars in cutting-edge technology to Chrysler to help them do the same. Fiat has also committed to working with Chrysler to build new fuel-efficient cars and engines right here in America.

Now, this partnership was only possible because of unprecedented sacrifices on the part of Chrysler's stakeholders, who are willing to give something up so that this company and all the men and women whose livelihoods depend on it might see a better day. Chrysler's management, and in particular, its CEO, Robert Nardelli, have played a positive and constructive role throughout this process. The United Auto Workers, who had already made painful concessions, agreed to further cuts in wages and benefits, cuts that will help Chrysler survive, making it possible for so many workers to keep their jobs and about 170,000 retirees and their families to keep their health care.

Several major financial institutions, led by J.P. Morgan, agreed to reduce their debt to less than one-third of its face value to help free Chrysler from its crushing obligations. The German automaker, Daimler, agreed to give up its stake in Chrysler and contribute to the company's pension plan, further easing Chrysler's financial burden. And countless Americans across our country will be making major sacrifices as well, as a result of plans to consolidate dealers, brands, and product lines.

And while many stakeholders made sacrifices and worked constructively, I have to tell you some did not. In particular, a group of investment firms and hedge funds decided to hold out for the prospect of an unjustified taxpayer-funded bailout. They were hoping that everybody else would make sacrifices and they would have to make none. Some demanded twice the return that other lenders were getting. I don't stand with them. I stand with Chrysler's employees and their families and communities. I stand with Chrysler's management, its dealers, and its suppliers. I stand with the millions of Americans who own and want to buy Chrysler cars. I don't stand with those who held out when everybody else is making sacrifices. And that's why I'm supporting Chrysler's plans to use our bankruptcy laws to clear away its remaining obligations so the company can get back on its feet and onto a path of success.

Now, no one should be confused about what a bankruptcy process means. This is not a sign of weakness, but rather one more step on a clearly charted path to Chrysler's revival. Because of the fact that the UAW and many of the banks, the biggest stakeholders in this whole process, have already aligned, have already agreed, this process will be quick. It will be efficient. It's designed to deal with those last few holdouts, and it will be controlled. It will not disrupt the lives of the people who work at Chrysler or live in communities that depend on it, and it will not affect the ability of American consumers to buy a Chrysler or to get it serviced and repaired. It's a process that has the full support of Chrysler's key stakeholders and the full backing of the United States Government. And I have every confidence that Chrysler will emerge from this process stronger and more competitive.

I know that there are some who will insist that bankruptcy, even for these limited purposes, is a step that should not have been taken. But it was unsustainable to let enormous liabilities remain on Chrysler's books, and it was unacceptable to let a small group of speculators endanger Chrysler's future by refusing to sacrifice like everyone else. So I recognize that the path we're taking is hard. But as is often the case, the hard path is the right one.

The path we're taking also involves steps to shore up financing, because we cannot have viable car companies without strong car financing companies. It's now clear that

Chrysler Financial, the institution that finances Chrysler's cars and dealers, would on its own require an unacceptably large stream of taxpayer money to remain viable. That's something I refuse to provide. And that is why, as part of this agreement, GMAC, an independent bank holding company that finances General Motors, has agreed to finance new Chrysler sales. We will be providing additional capital to GMAC to help unlock our frozen credit markets and free up lending so that consumers can get auto loans and dealers can finance their inventories, a measure that will help stabilize not only our auto market, but the broader economy as well. And tomorrow the Small Business Administration will be announcing it is expanding eligibility for some loans to include more suppliers and dealers, including RV dealers.

So these are some of the steps that we're taking to make it easier for Americans to buy a car. If you are considering buying a car, I hope it will be an American car. I want to remind you that if you decide to buy a Chrysler, your warranty will be safe, because it is backed by the United States Government. And to further boost demand for autos, we are working to accelerate the purchase of a Federal fleet, and we're also working with Congress on fleet modernization legislation that can provide a credit to consumers who turn in old cars and purchase cleaner, more fuel-efficient cars.

As pleased as I am about today's announcement and about the opportunity Chrysler has to remake itself, we know that far too many Americans in far too many communities are still struggling, as a result of layoffs not only at plants that produce cars, but at the businesses that produce the parts that go into them and at the dealers that sell and repair them. And that's why, as I discussed the last time we gathered here to talk about autos, I've named Ed Montgomery to be the Director of Recovery for Auto Communities and Workers. Ed will be traveling to Michigan next week with representatives from all the key Government agencies represented here, reaching out to our hardest hit areas, cutting through redtape, ensuring that the full resources of the Federal Government are getting to the workers, the families, and communities that need it the most.

Now, these are challenging times for America's auto industry and for the American people. But I am confident that if we as a nation can act with the same sense of shared sacrifice and shared purpose that's been shown by so many of Chrysler's stakeholders, if we can embrace the idea that we're all in it together, from the union hall to the boardroom to the Halls of Congress, then we will succeed not only with Chrysler, we will not only see our American auto industry rise again, but we will rebuild our entire economy and make the 21st century another American Century.

We have made great progress. We can make great American cars. Chrysler and GM are going to come back. And I am very confident that we're going to be able to make once again the U.S. auto industry the best auto industry in the world. And I want to thank my entire auto team who worked so diligently on what I consider to be a much better outcome than it looked like we were going to see 30 days ago.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:08 p.m. in the Grand Foyer at the White House.

Remarks Following a Meeting on the Federal Government Procurement Process

April 30, 2009

Well, the main thing that I wanted to do was to thank the four leaders who are here, Congressman Skelton and McHugh and Senators Levin and McCain.

The GAO last year looked at 95 major acquisitions in the Defense Department and found that we had $295 billion worth of overruns and wasteful spending—$295 billion.

And as Secretary Gates has said, every dollar that's wasted because of inappropriate no-bid contracts and waste and abuse, that's a dollar that could be going to help our—protect our troops, advance our national security, keep the American people safe.

These four leaders have put together a procurement reform package that is long overdue. They've shown extraordinary courage and extraordinary leadership in moving it forward. It's fully bipartisan. It has the support of the Department of Defense, and it has my full support.

And so I'm eager to get this legislation on my desk before Memorial Day, so that we can start getting on track to spending all our money wisely, not just in the Defense Department, but as I've said, if we can crack this nut, as tough as it is, it gives us further momentum to continue to make the changes in our budget that can start assuring taxpayers that their money is being well spent. And in the process, it means that we're going to be spending our money in ways that are more likely to keep the American people safe.

So I just want to thank these legislators. They have the full support of the White House moving forward. And as part of this, I also just want to mention I think that Secretary Gates has done a tremendous job with the budget that he's crafted going forward in reflecting some of the same principles, that we spend our money where it's needed based on national security interests and not based on politics. And I'm going to be urging everybody to take a hard, close look at the reforms that Secretary Gates has proposed. I think it's part and parcel of the overall attempt at gaining efficiency and improving out national security.

So thank you, gentlemen, for the great work you're doing. Okay, thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:04 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Remarks at the Wounded Warrior Project Soldier Ride Opening Ceremony
April 30, 2009

The President. Thank you. It's good weather for a race, it's not too hot.

Thank you, Secretary Gates, for your introduction and, more importantly, for the extraordinary job that you are doing as our Secretary of Defense. I want to thank Secretary Shinseki, who served our country with extraordinary valor and courage, who was wounded in Vietnam, and who's leading our efforts to create a 21st century VA.

And I want to thank my friend, Tammy Duckworth, who lost her legs in Iraq and never stopped serving her country when she came home. I got to know Tammy in my home State of Illinois, and I know that she is going to be a great Assistant Secretary of the VA. And thanks to all of those at Walter Reed and National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, the VA, and the Pentagon who have joined us today—and for all that you do for our wounded warriors. Welcome to the White House.

There are heroes among us today, men and women who served their country without falter, without fail; men and women who selflessly risked their lives on behalf of others, so that others might live. Soldiers like Sergeant Jeremiah Church, who was shot while defending his unit from an ambush in Iraq, but kept fighting until he lost consciousness. Soldiers like Sergeant First Class Rashe Hall, who, despite being badly wounded by a rocket-propelled grenade, repeatedly charged a Taliban ambush in Afghanistan so that his men might get to safety, then returned to give them first aid before receiving his own.

And soldiers like Staff Sergeant Dillon Behr from my home State of Illinois. While in Afghanistan last year, his unit came under heavy fire. Despite sustaining not one, but two life-threatening injuries, he held his position and fought for 6½ hours until he could no longer hold a weapon, all so that American and Afghan troops might move to safety. Today, he's undergoing rehab at Walter Reed, and he's going to college as he pursues the next chapter in his life of service.

These men served with extraordinary bravery. They saved lives. And these men were

awarded the Silver Star for Valor. They were there for their brothers and sisters in the United States Armed Forces no matter what, and that's the idea behind the Soldier Ride we're kicking off today.

Now, like a lot of great ideas, this one was conceived in a bar. [*Laughter*] A young bartender on Long Island named Chris Carney began talking about biking across the country to raise funds and awareness for returning troops and wounded warriors. And his boss said to him, "If you don't do it, I'll find somebody who will."

So Chris hopped on his bike for what became the first annual Soldier Ride. The next year, a couple of wounded warriors joined him, a year later, even more. Civilians started to ride along. Grateful Americans began lining the streets to cheer and show their support. More rides were added, and more money was raised.

And 5 years after that first ride, I'm honored to have 40 wounded warriors gathered here on the South Lawn to kick off the third annual "White House to the Lighthouse" challenge. Over the next 3 days, these men and women, along with family and supporters, will ride from here to Annapolis on bicycles and in wheelchairs, raising money and awareness for others returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with serious injuries.

Now, keep in mind that today's riders once faced down the possibility that they might never have an active lifestyle again. Some are missing limbs, coping with nerve damage, living with traumatic brain injury or blindness. Some have endured painful rehabilitation, some still are, and some have battles yet to come.

And, these wounded warriors didn't get to choose the direction their lives would take the instant they were injured. But now they choose to prove that life after injury isn't about what you can't do, it's about what you can. They choose to keep their faith with the future. They choose to keep fighting for their brothers and sisters and show them that they're not alone.

We also remember that so many are supported by spouses and children, parents and siblings who suffered the absence of a loved one and then stood by their side through their recovery. These military families are heroes too. And they are a top priority of Michelle and me, and they will always have our support.

To anyone who's along their route this weekend, I ask you to go out there and cheer, salute, say thank you. And we'll do our part to support our troops, their families, and all who have worn the uniform of the United States of America, because when it comes to their service and sacrifice, warm words and gestures are more than warranted, but they're not nearly enough.

Our veterans deserve the care they were promised and the benefits that they have earned. And as long as I'm Commander in Chief, that's what they'll get. Just as these wounded warriors are there for one another, this country is going to be there for them.

And now I'm going to blow a horn and get this thing started. So who has got the horn?

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. Right here, Mr. President.

The President. Oh, this is the official horn?

Secretary Shinseki. Hair trigger, white button.

The President. Hair trigger, white button—all right. [*Laughter*] Everybody—let's make sure everybody is lined up properly. Everybody all set? I don't want to catch anybody off guard here.

All right, on your mark, get set, go.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:25 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Chris Carney, founder, Wounded Warrior Project Soldier Ride.

Statement on House of Representatives Passage of Credit Card Reform Legislation

April 30, 2009

Today, under the leadership of Representatives Barney Frank, Carolyn Maloney, and Luis Gutierrez, members of both parties in the House of Representatives came together to protect

American consumers, paving the way toward real, meaningful credit card reform. While Americans have a responsibility to live within their means and pay what they owe, credit card companies have a responsibility to set rules that are fair and transparent. The principles I have long supported would help ensure that these responsibilities are met: strong and reliable consumer protections, credit card forms and statements that have plain language in plain sight, tools that can help people make an informed choice about what credit card to use, and beefed-up monitoring, enforcement, and penalties. And building on what we have achieved today, I will work with Congress in the weeks to come so that I can sign a credit card reform bill into law that upholds these principles and upholds the interests of the American people.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 627.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting a Request for Funds to Enhance Capabilities to Combat the Global Influenza Outbreak

April 30, 2009

Dear Madam Speaker:

This week, as reports of the 2009 H1N1 flu outbreak around the world were made public, my Administration has been carefully monitoring the situation, coordinating State and local responses, assessing the risks here in the United States, and cooperating with international organizations and health officials around the globe.

Out of an abundance of caution, I asked the Congress earlier this week to consider a proposal to provide $1.5 billion to enhance our Nation's capability to respond to the potential spread of this outbreak. As the attached detailed request reflects, these funds should be provided with maximum flexibility to allow us to address this emerging situation. Among the uses of these funds could be: supplementing anti-viral stockpiles; developing a vaccine; supporting monitoring, diagnostic, and public health response capabilities; assisting international efforts to stem this outbreak and to address related international needs.

Already, Federal, State, and local public health officials are working day and night to respond quickly and effectively wherever cases of this flu may be found and to prepare the entire country for any potential progression of this outbreak.

I urge the Congress to act expeditiously in considering this important request, the details of which are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 1.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters

May 1, 2009

The President. All right. Well, thank you, everybody. It's been just over a week since we've learned about this novel strain of the flu virus that's now affected people in at least 11 countries—or at least 11 of our States as well as 11 other countries. And throughout this process, my top priority has been the health and the safety of the American people. And to that end, we've closely monitored the situation.

I am extraordinarily proud of the work that's been done by the Department of Health and Human Services, as well as the Department of Homeland Security and the CDC. We've got

Dr. Richard Besser here, as well as Janet Napolitano; they've been really leading the charge. We've now brought in the cavalry with Secretary Sebelius.

We're obviously focused on what needs to be done immediately: identifying and mitigating cases of H1N1 in the United States; prepositioning antiviral treatments for those who are infected and making sure that they are distributed appropriately around the country; providing clear guidance as well as the best science to our State and local officials as they move forward; and speaking clearly to the American people, as I did the evening of the news conference, about the mitigation steps that they personally can take.

But we also need to prepare for the long term, since we know that these kinds of threats can emerge at any moment. Even if it turns out that the H1N1 is relatively mild on the front end, it could come back in a more virulent form during the actual flu season. And that's why we are investing in our public health infrastructure. We've had discussions about the production of vaccines for—in anticipation of the flu season. And we've made sure that all our agencies here are coordinating: that they have appropriate action plans; that we, for example, are working with the Department of Education to provide clear guidelines for school closures; that we are working with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, for example, to ensure that businesses are supportive of their hourly workers who need to stay home but may be worried about losing their jobs because they don't have sick leave, making sure that they are cooperating in what is going to be an overarching effort; discussions with our Secretary of State as well as our Ambassador to the United Nations about how we're going to respond to potential requests from other countries for assistance in dealing with this issue.

Overall, I'm very pleased with the progress that we've made. I think that those who have been on top of this have done an extraordinary job. I'm optimistic that we're going to be able to manage this effectively, but we still have more work to do, and I'm glad I've got such a great team doing it. And I want to make clear to everybody—and the reason I brought this Cabinet meeting together is—that we are taking this very seriously and we will take every single step that's necessary to make sure that the American people are safe.

One last point I want to make, because this was actually raised during this meeting; somebody asked, "Why is this different from other flus?" We don't know for certain that this will end up being more severe than other seasonal flus that we have. It's been noted, I think, before that you have over 36,000 die on average every year from seasonal flus; you have 200,000 hospitalizations.

It may turn out that H1N1 is—runs its course like ordinary flus, in which case we will have prepared, and we won't need all these preparations. The reason that people are concerned is—the scientists are concerned is this is a new strain. So what happens is, is that Americans and people around the world have not built up immunity in the same way that they've built up immunity to the seasonal flus that we're accustomed to. Those seasonal flus may change, mutate slightly from year to year, but they're all roughly in the same band. When you have a new strain, then potentially our immune systems can't deal with it as effectively. And there are indications that in Mexico, at least, what you saw were relatively young, healthy people die from these—from the H1N1, rather than people whose immune system is already compromised, older individuals, very small infants, and so forth.

So that's why we're taking it seriously. We have not yet seen those same kinds of fatalities here in the United States among young, healthy people with noncompromised immune systems, but we want to make sure that we're preparing appropriately.

So I just want everybody to be clear that this is why this is a cause for concern but not alarm. We are essentially ensuring that in the worst-case scenario we can manage this appropriately, government, working with businesses and individuals in the private sector, end up containing an outbreak and that we can, ultimately, get through this.

So thank you very much, everybody. Hope you guys have a great weekend.

Supreme Court

Q. What are you looking for in a Supreme Court nominee?

Q. Can you comment on the news about Justice Souter?

The President. No Supreme Court questions.

Q. No Supreme Court questions? What are you looking for in a nominee? [*Laughter*]

The President. Have a great weekend, guys.

Q. You too, Mr. President.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:37 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Richard E. Besser, Acting Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano; Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius; Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; and Ambassador Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

Remarks a Naturalization Ceremony for Active Duty Servicemembers
May 1, 2009

The President. Thank you. Thank you so much. This is a lot of fun. This makes so much of the hard work we do worth it, to see this ceremony here today. It is my honor and my personal pleasure to be the first to address you as my fellow Americans. And welcome to your White House. Now, I know this day carries a lot of meaning not only for you, but for your family members and your fellow servicemembers who join you today.

Each of you has a unique story to tell about the journey that led you here. You hail from every corner of the Earth, from Southeast Asia to Central Europe, from West Africa to South America. Some of you came to this country as young children, because your parents wanted to give you a better life in the land of opportunity. Others traveled here as adults, enduring hardship and sacrifice to provide for your own families. But all of you have one thing in common: You're here because you have not merely chosen to live in this country, you've chosen to serve this country.

You're here for the same reason that Jeonathan Zapata is here. Jeonathan recently returned from serving as part of our efforts in Afghanistan. He actually helped man the 400,000th aircraft landing aboard the USS *Kitty Hawk*. And Jeonathan wanted to serve the country he considers his own, even though he was not yet a citizen, because America had been so good to him from the time he came here from Nicaragua as a child. "By serving in the military," Jeonathan says, "I can also give back to the U.S."

So, Jeonathan, I'd like you to stand.

You're here for the same reason—you can sit down now, Jeonathan—[*laughter*]. You're here for the same reason that Chryshann Pierre is here. Chryshann, where are you? There you are. Chryshann is an Army Specialist returning from service in Iraq late last year. Originally, she joined the military because she wanted to provide stability for her three children. But then she discovered something she did not expect: She loves being in the Army. [*Laughter*] In fact, she even said that she loved basic training. Chryshann, you've got to be pretty tough to love basic training. [*Laughter*]

You all have your own stories—you can sit down, Chryshann—[*applause*]. You all have your own stories of how you came to this country. And you all have your own personal reasons for why you joined the military. But in the service that you render, in the sacrifices that each of you have made and will continue to make, in the commitment you've shown to your adopted nation, you're part of a larger story, America's story.

For more than two centuries, this Nation has been a beacon of hope and opportunity, a place that has drawn enterprising men and women from around the world who have sought to build a life as good as their talents and their hard work would allow. And generation after generation of immigrants have come

to these shores because they believe that in America all things are possible.

So you are not only living examples of that promise, you're also serving to defend that promise for future generations. And your service reminds all of us that much of the strength of this country is drawn from those who have chosen to call it home. It's not lost on me or anybody here today that at a time when we face an economic crisis born in many ways of irresponsibility, there are those who are actively pursuing greater responsibility.

And one person here today who fits that description well enough is Jeanne Ebongue Tapo—right here. She grew up in a poor family in Gabon, Africa, the daughter of a single mother raising five children by herself. And Jeanne immigrated to the United States to provide for her family and to pursue her dream of becoming a dentist. And that's why she joined the Navy. And she hoped she'd have the opportunity to work and see the world and also earn her education.

And that's exactly what she has been able to do. She has started college; she's had the chance to travel. And even though she's had to make sacrifices to be apart from her loved ones, the people she's met in the Navy have become like a family away from home. And she's had the chance to be a part of what it feels like—what feels like a small community and, at the same time, to be part of something much larger than herself. So Jeanne, thank you.

Despite all the—all that she's faced, despite all the obstacles that she's overcome, Jeanne has made it her mission to serve others. "At the end of the day," she said, "the only thing that matters is that I helped."

As our newest Americans, all of you remind us just how precious our citizenship is, of how much it's worth and why it's worth protecting. You all remind us that citizenship is not just a collection of rights, it's also a set of responsibilities; that America's success is not a gift, it is hard won. It depends on each of us doing our part. So thank you all for your service. I am extraordinarily proud of you. And your nation is grateful to you.

So now it is also my privilege to present a distinguished American with an award in recognition of the many contributions of naturalized citizens like all of you. It's called the Outstanding American by Choice award. It's given to—it's given by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and it is my honor to award it to Peter Lemon. And let me tell you a little bit about Peter. Peter was just 19 years old, and a citizen for just 7 years, when he and his platoon came under fire in the Tay Ninh Province of Vietnam.

Wounded by shrapnel from a mortar that exploded near his foxhole, Specialist Lemon kept fighting to protect his position against wave after wave of attack. The battle raged for hours. He was wounded a second time, and then a third. But he refused to give up, even leaving his foxhole and exposing himself to enemy fire in order to continue to defend his fellow Rangers.

In fact, once the fight was over, Specialist Lemon refused to be evacuated until others had been taken to a field hospital. And Pete would spend a month in the hospital himself to recover from his injuries. Soon after he returned home, he would be presented with the Medal of Honor by President Nixon.

Today, Peter Lemon is a proud father and a proud veteran, as well as an author and a filmmaker. And he has devoted his time and energies to talking about what his own experiences have meant to him and what he has learned, to encourage each and every one of us that the way to make the most of our talents is to make a difference in the lives of others.

Now, his experience is a testament to the men and women who have come to this country to build a better life for themselves and their families, and who have, by their commitment and contribution, made America a much better place as well.

So it is my honor to present this Outstanding American by Choice award to Peter Lemon. Peter, will you please come here?

[*At this point, the President presented the award.*]

The President. One of you might win this someday. You're already well on the way.

Are you going to lead the Pledge of Allegiance?

Peter Lemon. Yes.

Would everybody please stand, and we're going to say the Pledge of Allegiance for our great Nation.

[*Mr. Lemon then led a recital of the Pledge of Allegiance.*]

The President. Thank you so much, Peter.

Thank you, everybody. With that, the ceremony comes to an end. We are extraordinarily grateful for our fellow citizens and all the service that they have rendered. Give them one more big round of applause.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:27 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Remarks on the Retirement of Supreme Court Justice David H. Souter
May 1, 2009

I just got off the telephone with Justice Souter, and so I would like to say a few words about his decision to retire from the Supreme Court.

Throughout his two decades on the Supreme Court, Justice Souter has shown what it means to be a fair-minded and independent judge. He came to the bench with no particular ideology. He never sought to promote a political agenda, and he consistently defied labels and rejected absolutes, focusing instead on just one task: reaching a just result in the case that was before him.

He approached judging as he approaches life, with a feverish work ethic and a good sense of humor, with integrity, equanimity, and compassion, the hallmark of not just being a good judge, but of being a good person.

I am incredibly grateful for his dedicated service. I told him as much when we spoke. I spoke on behalf of the American people, thanking him for his service. And I wish him safe travels on his journey home to his beloved New Hampshire and on the road ahead.

Now, the process of selecting someone to replace Justice Souter is among my most serious responsibilities as President, so I will seek somebody with a sharp and independent mind and a record of excellence and integrity. I will seek someone who understands that justice isn't about some abstract legal theory or footnote in a casebook; it is also about how our laws affect the daily realities of people's lives, whether they can make a living and care for their families, whether they feel safe in their homes and welcomed in their own nation.

I view that quality of empathy, of understanding and identifying with people's hopes and struggles, as an essential ingredient for arriving as just decisions and outcomes. I will seek somebody who is dedicated to the rule of law, who honors our constitutional traditions, who respects the integrity of the judicial process and the appropriate limits of the judicial role. I will seek somebody who shares my respect for constitutional values on which this Nation was founded and who brings a thoughtful understanding of how to apply them in our time.

As I make this decision, I intend to consult with members of both parties across the political spectrum. And it is my hope that we can swear in our new Supreme Court Justice in time for him or her to be seated by the first Monday in October when the Court's new term begins.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 3:04 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House.

Remarks at an Installation Ceremony for Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius and Secretary of Commerce Gary F. Locke

May 1, 2009

The President. Hello, everybody. Please, everybody have a seat. This is a big family here—[*laughter*]—feel a bit like a wedding, you know. [*Laughter*]

We're here this afternoon to formally fill out my Cabinet with my new Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius, and my Secretary of Commerce, Gary Locke. Secretary Sebelius and Secretary Locke were actually sworn-in before today, but around here, we like to make sure we get it right. [*Laughter*] I had to do it twice, and so now we make everybody do it twice. [*Laughter*]

When I announced Kathleen as my choice for HHS Secretary, I said that one of her responsibilities would be to make certain our Nation is prepared for a pandemic. What I didn't expect was that a serious H1N1 flu outbreak would be her first assignment. But it is, and that's why on Tuesday, only hours after being confirmed by the Senate, she was sworn-in by my side in the Oval Office and then went straight to the Situation Room to get to work dealing with this emergency.

But managing crises is nothing new for Kathleen. She has plenty of experience doing just that as Governor of Kansas, and that expertise has enabled her to hit the ground running. She's been closely monitoring and carefully managing the situation, along with her Acting Director at the CDC, Dr. Richard Besser, and Secretary Janet Napolitano. They're making sure all Federal agencies are coordinating their efforts, and they'll keep the American people updated over the days ahead.

Experts tell us this is a unique virus with the potential to have a great impact, and as long as it remains a potentially grave threat, we're going to take it very seriously. And obviously, we hope the precautions we're taking prove unnecessary, but better safe than sorry. We will take every appropriate action to make sure that the American people are safe.

And if the flu outbreak isn't enough, Secretary Sebelius has a lot of other challenges on her plate, from guaranteeing the safety of our Nation's food and drug supply, to keeping America at the forefront of medical research, to helping to lead our effort to ensure that every American has access to quality, affordable health care.

As a former State insurance commissioner and Governor, Kathleen has been on the frontlines of our health care crisis. And she shares my belief that if we're going to cut costs for families and businesses, maintain quality, and improve the long-term economic health of our Nation, we must realize that fixing what's wrong with our health care system is no longer just a moral imperative; it's an economic and fiscal imperative. If we want to make companies more competitive and reduce our budget deficits in the future, we need to tackle health care reform right now.

The reform we're talking about won't focus on Democratic ideas or Republican ideas, but on ideas that work. And that's precisely the kind of commitment to bipartisan accomplishment that Kathleen embodies. She is, after all, the daughter of a Democratic Governor and the daughter-in-law of a Republican Congressman. Her father, who is here, former Ohio Governor John Gilligan—I just want to acknowledge him—where did he go? There he is, right in front. Give him a big round of applause. [*Applause*] He and Kathleen make up the first father-daughter pair of Governors in the United States.

But Kathleen has a—forged a reputation for bipartisan problem-solving in her own right. Time and again, she bridged the partisan divide and worked with a Republican legislature to get things done for the people of Kansas.

And Kathleen possesses the patience and understanding honed by nearly 35 years of marriage to her husband Gary Sebelius—[*laughter*]—the former first dude of Kansas—[*laughter*]—the grace and good humor required to raise sons like Ned and John, and the kind of pragmatic wisdom you tend to find in a Kansan. She's already a tremendous asset to my Cabinet. She has hit the ground

running. I look forward to working with her in the years to come.

Now, when I chose Gary Locke for my Commerce Secretary, I mentioned his own remarkable story. More than 100 years ago, Gary's grandfather left China on a steamship bound for America and found work as a domestic servant in Washington State. He raised a son, Gary's father Jimmy, who would go on to fight in World War II, return home and open a grocery store, and later raise a family of his own.

Gary worked his way through Yale with the help of scholarships and student loans, earned his law degree, and returned to Washington State to devote his life to public service. And when he took the oath of office as Governor of Washington, he did so in the State capitol building not 1 mile from the home where his grandfather worked as a servant all those years ago. And that's how I know Gary shares my deep, abiding belief in the American Dream, because he's lived it too.

He's since proceeded to honor the family's legacy with years of distinguished service as one of the Nation's most able and forward-thinking Governors. He worked to promote economic development and attract businesses to Washington that would create the jobs of the 21st century, jobs in science and technology, agriculture and clean energy. And I'm proud of what he and his team at the Department of Commerce are doing to help create conditions in which our workers can prosper, our businesses can compete and thrive, and our economy can grow.

I want to thank his lovely wife, Mona, their adorable children, Emily, Dylan, and Madeline, for being here—thank you, guys—and for the sacrifices they've made to send Gary from one Washington to another, especially Emily, because I know it's harder when you're older. [*Laughter*] And I'm grateful to Gary for his service, because I know how hard it is to be away from your family.

And my Cabinet is now full of energetic innovators like Kathleen and Gary, a team of leaders who push the envelope every day because they know that whether the wind is in our face or at our backs, America does not settle; we always march forward. I am thrilled to have them by my side as we continue the work of turning our economy around and laying a new foundation for growth that delivers on the change the American people asked for and the promise of a new and better day ahead.

So with that, I'm going to turn it over to another extraordinary member of my team, my Vice President, Joe Biden, to administer the oaths.

Joe.

Vice President Joe Biden. Thank you, Mr. President.

[*At this point, the Vice President administered the oath.*]

The President. Thank you, everybody. Have a great weekend.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:50 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano.

Statement on World Press Freedom Day
May 1, 2009

World Press Freedom Day is annually observed on May 3 to remind us all of the vital importance of this core freedom. It is a day in which we celebrate the indispensable role played by journalists in exposing abuses of power, while we sound the alarm about the growing number of journalists silenced by death or jail as they attempt to bring daily news to the public.

Although World Press Freedom Day has only been celebrated since 1993, its roots run deep in the international community. In 1948, as people across the globe emerged from the horrors of the Second World War, nations saw

fit to enshrine in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights the fundamental principle that everyone "has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

Even as the world recognizes the central and indisputable importance of press freedom, journalists find themselves in frequent peril. Since this day was first celebrated some 16 years ago, 692 journalists have been killed. Only a third of those deaths were linked to the dangers of covering war; the majority of victims were local reporters covering topics such as crime, corruption, and national security in their home countries. Adding to this tragic figure are the hundreds more each year who face intimidation, censorship, and arbitrary arrest, guilty of nothing more than a passion for truth and a tenacious belief that a free society depends on an informed citizenry. In every corner of the globe, there are journalists in jail or being actively harassed, from Azerbaijan to Zimbabwe, Burma to Uzbekistan, Cuba to Eritrea. Emblematic examples of this distressing reality are figures like J.S. Tissainayagam in Sri Lanka or Shi Tao and Hu Jia in China. We are also especially concerned about the citizens from our own country currently under detention abroad, individuals such as Roxana Saberi in Iran and Euna Lee and Laura Ling in North Korea.

Today I lend my voice of support and admiration to all those brave men and women of the press who labor to expose truth and enhance accountability around the world. In so doing, I recall the words of Thomas Jefferson: "The basis of our governments being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter."

The President's Weekly Address
May 2, 2009

Over the last week, my administration has taken several precautions to address the challenge posed by the 2009 H1N1 flu virus. Today I'd like to take a few minutes to explain why.

This is a new strain of the flu virus, and because we haven't developed an immunity to it, it has more potential to cause us harm. Unlike the various strains of animal flu that have emerged in the past, it's a flu that's spreading from human to human. This creates the potential for a pandemic, which is why we are acting quickly and aggressively.

This H1N1 flu has had its biggest impact in Mexico, where it's claimed a number of lives and infected hundreds more. Thus far, the strain in this country, that has infected people in at least 19 States, has not been as potent or as deadly. We can't know for certain why that is, which is why we are taking all necessary precautions in the event that the virus does turn into something worse.

This is also why the Centers for Disease Control has recommended that schools and childcare facilities with confirmed cases of the virus close for up to 14 days. This is why we urge employers to allow infected employees to take as many sick days as necessary. If more schools are forced to close, we've also recommended that both parents and businesses think about contingency plans if children do have to stay home. We've asked every American to take the same steps you would take to prevent any other flu: keep your hands washed, cover your mouth when you cough, stay home from work if you're sick, and keep your children home from school if they're sick.

The White House has launched pages in Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter to support the ongoing efforts by the CDC to update the public as quickly and effectively as possible. And as our scientists and researchers learn more information about this virus every day, the guidance we offer will likely change. What will not change is the fact that we'll be making every recommendation based on the best science possible.

We will also continue investing in every resource necessary to treat this virus and prevent

a wider outbreak. The good news is that the current strain of H1N1 can be defeated by a course of antiviral treatment that we already have on hand. We began this week with 50 million courses of this treatment in the Strategic National Stockpile. Over the course of the last few days, we have delivered one-quarter of that stockpile to States so that they are prepared to treat anyone who is infected with this virus. We then purchased an additional 13 million treatments to refill our strategic stockpile.

Out of an abundance of caution, I have also asked Congress for $1.5 billion, if it's needed, to purchase additional antivirals, emergency equipment, and the development of a vaccine that can prevent this virus as we prepare for the next flu season in the fall.

The Recovery Act that Congress enacted in February also included expansions of community health centers, a dramatic increase in the training of health care workers and nurses, and $300 million for the development and deployment of vaccines, all of which will help us meet this threat.

Finally, thanks to the work that the last administration and Congress did to prepare for a possible avian flu pandemic in 2005, States and the Federal Government have fully operable influenza readiness plans and are better prepared to deal with such a challenge than ever before.

It is my greatest hope and prayer that all of these precautions and preparations prove unnecessary. But because we have it within our power to limit the potential damage of this virus, we have a solemn and urgent responsibility to take the necessary steps. I would sooner take action now than hesitate and face graver consequences later. I have no higher priority as President of the United States than the safety and security of the American people, and I will do whatever is necessary to protect this country. So I want to thank every American for their patience and understanding during this developing challenge, and I promise that this Government will continue speaking clearly and honestly about the steps we're taking to meet it.

Thank you.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:25 p.m. on May 1 in the Library at the White House for broadcast on May 2. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 1 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 2.

Statement on the Death of Former Representative Jack F. Kemp
May 3, 2009

Jack Kemp's commitment to public service and his passion for politics influenced not only the direction of his party, but his country. From his tenure as a Buffalo Congressman to his ascent in national politics, Jack Kemp was a man who could fiercely advocate his own beliefs and principles while also remembering the lessons he learned years earlier on the football field: that bitter divisiveness between race and class and station only stood in the way of the common aim of a team to win.

Michelle and I extend our prayers and deepest condolences to the entire Kemp family.

Remarks on Tax Reform
May 4, 2009

All right. Good morning, everybody. I hope you all had a good weekend.

Let's begin with a simple premise: Nobody likes paying taxes, particularly in times of economic stress. But most Americans meet their responsibilities because they understand that it's an obligation of citizenship, necessary to pay the costs of our common defense and our mutual well-being.

And yet, even as most American citizens and businesses meet these responsibilities, there are others who are shirking theirs. And

many are aided and abetted by a broken tax system, written by well-connected lobbyists on behalf of well-heeled interests and individuals. It's a Tax Code full of corporate loopholes that makes it perfectly legal for companies to avoid paying their fair share. It's a Tax Code that makes it all too easy for a number—a small number of individuals and companies to abuse overseas tax havens to avoid paying any taxes at all. And it's a Tax Code that says you should pay lower taxes if you create a job in Bangalore, India, than if you create one in Buffalo, New York.

Now, understand, one of the strengths of our economy is the global reach of our businesses. And I want to see our companies remain the most competitive in the world. But the way to make sure that happens is not to reward our companies for moving jobs off our shores or transferring profits to overseas tax havens. This is something that I talked about again and again during the course of the campaign. The way we make our businesses competitive is not to reward American companies operating overseas with a roughly 2-percent tax rate on foreign profits, a rate that costs tens—that costs taxpayers tens of billions of dollars a year. The way to make American businesses competitive is not to let some citizens and businesses dodge their responsibilities while ordinary Americans pick up the slack.

Unfortunately, that's exactly what we're doing. These problems have been highlighted by Chairmen Charlie Rangel and Max Baucus, by leaders like Senator Carl Levin and Congressman Lloyd Doggett. And now is the time to finally do something about them. And that's why today I'm announcing a set of proposals to crack down on illegal overseas tax evasion, close loopholes, and make it more profitable for companies to create jobs here in the United States.

For years, we've talked about ending tax breaks for companies that ship jobs overseas and giving tax breaks to companies that create jobs here in America. That's what our budget will finally do. We will stop letting American companies that create jobs overseas take deductions on their expenses when they do not pay any American taxes on their profits. And we will use the savings to give tax cuts to companies that are investing in research and development here at home, so that we can jump-start job creation, foster innovation, and enhance America's competitiveness.

For years, we've talked about shutting down overseas tax havens that let companies setup operations to avoid paying taxes in America. That's what our budget will finally do. On the campaign, I used to talk about the outrage of a building in the Cayman Islands that had over 12,000 businesses claim this building as their headquarters. And I've said before, either this is the largest building in the world or the largest tax scam in the world. And I think the American people know which it is. It's the kind of tax scam that we need to end.

And that's why we are closing one of our biggest tax loopholes. It's a loophole that lets subsidiaries of some of our largest companies tell the IRS that they're paying taxes abroad, tell foreign governments that they're paying taxes elsewhere, and avoid paying taxes anywhere. And closing this single loophole will save taxpayers tens of billions of dollars, money that can be spent on reinvesting in America. And it will restore fairness to our Tax Code by helping ensure that all our citizens and all our companies are paying what they should.

Now, for years, we've talked about stopping Americans from illegally hiding their money overseas and getting tough with the financial institutions that let them get away with it. The Treasury Department and the IRS, under Secretary Geithner's leadership and Commissioner Shulman's, are already taking far-reaching steps to catch overseas tax cheats, but they need more support.

And that's why I'm asking Congress to pass some commonsense measures. One of these measures would let the IRS know how much income Americans are generating in overseas accounts by requiring overseas banks to provide 1099s for their American clients, just like Americans have to do for their bank accounts here in this country. If financial institutions won't cooperate with us, we will assume that they are sheltering money in tax havens and act accordingly. And to ensure that the IRS has the tools it needs to enforce our laws, we're seeking to hire nearly 800 more IRS agents to detect and pursue American tax evaders abroad.

So all in all, these and other reforms will save American taxpayers $210 billion over the next 10 years, savings we can use to reduce the deficit, cut taxes for American businesses that are playing by the rules, and provide meaningful relief for hard-working families. That's what we're doing. We're putting a middle class tax cut in the pockets of 95 percent of working families, and we're providing a two—$2,500 annual tax credit to put the dream of a college degree or advanced training within the reach for more students. We're providing a tax credit worth up to $8,000 for first-time homebuyers to help more Americans own a piece of the American Dream and to strengthen the housing market.

So the steps I am announcing today will help us deal with some of the most egregious examples of what's wrong with our Tax Code and will help us strengthen some of these other efforts. It's a downpayment on the larger tax reform we need to make our tax system simpler and fairer and more efficient for individuals and corporations.

Now, it will take time to undo the damage of distorted provisions that were slipped into our Tax Code by lobbyists and special interests, but with the steps I'm announcing today, we are beginning to crack down on Americans who are bending or breaking the rules, and we're helping to ensure that all Americans are contributing their fair share.

In other words, we're beginning to restore fairness and balance to our Tax Code. That's what I promised I would do during the campaign, that's what I'm committed to doing as President, and that is what I will work with members of my administration and Members of Congress to accomplish in the months and years to come.

Thanks very much, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:39 a.m. in the Grand Foyer at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner.

Remarks at a Cinco de Mayo Celebration
May 4, 2009

The President. Hello. *Gracias.*

Audience member. De nada. Bienvenidos.

The President. Bienvenidos. Welcome to *cinco de quatro*—[*laughter*]—Cinco de Mayo at the White House. We are a day early, but we always like to get a head start here at the Obama White House.

Cinco de Mayo marks a singular moment in Mexican history. Nearly 150 years ago, a ragtag band of soldiers and citizens, badly outnumbered and facing impossible odds, held their ground on a muddy hill to defend their nation from what was at the time the most fearsome fighting force in the world. That decisive victory at what became known as the Battle of Puebla ignited a pride in country and culture that Mexican Americans feel to this day.

And tomorrow, on both sides of our border, we'll pay tribute to our shared heritage by celebrating with friends and family, with love and laughter. We'll remember that America is a richer and more vibrant place thanks to the contributions of Mexican Americans. Contributions—[*applause*].

Audience member. Yeah!

The President. I knew that was Manny over there—"Yeah!" [*Laughter*] Pat, do something about Manny. [*Laughter*]

We'll remember that the contributions of commerce and culture, in language and literature, in faith, and in food have all made America a better place. And we will honor the service of Mexican Americans who have worn the uniform of the United States. We'll also recommit to advancing the ambitions and the dreams of generations of Mexican Americans and all Latinos who have had an immeasurable impact on the life of this Nation.

But even as we mark this joyous and festive occasion, we do so mindful of the fact that this is a difficult time for Mexico. The pain our global economic downturn has inflicted has only been deepened by the outbreak of the

H1N1 flu, as well as the drug-related violence that has robbed so many of their future.

One thing we know: Good neighbors work together when faced with common challenges. And that's why we're working closely with the Mexican Government to identify and treat illnesses that are caused by this new flu strain. I spoke to President Calderon on Saturday about this joint approach. That's why we're working in an urgent and coordinated fashion to end the drug wars. That's why we'll continue to stand side by side with the Mexican people in pursuit of our common security and our common prosperity.

So I know this is a tough time on both sides of the border. I know some of tomorrow's celebrations have been downsized or canceled out of an abundance of caution, from Puebla to Mexico City to my hometown of Chicago. And while we hope and pray that all these precautions and preparations will prove unnecessary, I applaud the Mexican Government and all the leaders who are taking responsibility and appropriate steps in order to keep the people safe.

As we honor our heritage and our heroes tomorrow, I also know this: Mexicans, Americans, and Mexican Americans are all a people who've known trial and persevered in the face of incredible odds. We're a people of revolution; who value hard work and sacrifice; who forever look forward to the future with a deep and abiding faith that the dream of opportunity is still real and alive in our time.

And when one of my predecessors once visited Mexico City, he said that "while geography has made us neighbors, tradition has made us friends. Economics has made us partners. And necessity has made us allies . . . two great and independent nations, united by hope instead of fear."

John F. Kennedy's message nearly a half century ago is my message now. And when I made my first trip to Mexico as President, not just 3 weeks ago, I was greeted by the children of both our nations waving flags of both our nations, a powerful reminder that in the end, everything we do is done to guarantee a better future for our children and our grandchildren.

And while I was there, I found it impossible not to be touched by the warmth, the vigor, and the forceful vitality of the Mexican people, a love of life I've seen in Mexican American communities throughout this Nation. And that's what we'll celebrate tomorrow, that's what we celebrate tonight, and that's what we will celebrate in the future.

So *feliz Cinco de Mayo*. Thank you very much for being here, and party on. Thank you.

Oh, I also want to—I want to make sure that—everybody knows the Bidens, but I want to make sure to acknowledge my good friend and a great friend of the United States, Ambassador Arturo Sarukhan, and his lovely wife, Valencia, who are here.

[*At this point, the President descended from the podium and greeted members of the audience. He then returned to the podium and continued as follows.*]

The President. Hey, wait. In an incredible breach of protocol, I introduced my good friend, the Ambassador, but it—he has greetings from the people of Mexico. And so I take complete responsibility for that; I apologize. Will everybody please settle down, and let's hear from our Ambassador from Mexico.

[*Mexico's Ambassador to the U.S. Arturo Sarukhan Casamitjana made brief remarks.*]

The President. All right, now you can go party. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:28 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Manuel Sanchez, managing partner, Sanchez Daniels & Hoffman LLP; Patricia Pulido Sanchez, president and chief executive officer, Pulido Sanchez Communications, LLC; and Pilar Veronica Valencia Fedora, wife of Ambassador Sarukhan. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Ambassador Sarukhan.

Statement on the Global Health Initiative
May 5, 2009

In the 21st century, disease flows freely across borders and oceans, and in recent days, the 2009 H1N1 virus has reminded us of the urgent need for action. We cannot wall ourselves off from the world and hope for the best, nor ignore the public health challenges beyond our borders. An outbreak in Indonesia can reach Indiana within days, and public health crises abroad can cause widespread suffering, conflict, and economic contraction. That is why I am asking Congress to approve my fiscal year 2010 budget request of $8.6 billion—and $63 billion over 6 years—to shape a new, comprehensive global health strategy. We cannot simply confront individual preventable illnesses in isolation. The world is interconnected, and that demands an integrated approach to global health.

As a U.S. Senator, I joined a bipartisan majority in supporting the Bush administration's effective President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). That plan has provided lifesaving medicines and prevention efforts to millions of people living in some of the world's most extreme conditions. Last summer, the Congress approved the Lantos-Hyde U.S. Global Leadership Against HIV/AIDS Act, legislation that I was proud to cosponsor as a U.S. Senator and now carry out as President. But I also recognize that we will not be successful in our efforts to end deaths from AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis unless we do more to improve health systems around the world, focus our efforts on child and maternal health, and ensure that best practices drive the funding for these programs.

My budget makes critical investments in a new, comprehensive global health strategy. We support the promise of PEPFAR while increasing and enhancing our efforts to combat diseases that claim the lives of 26,000 children each day. We cannot fix every problem. But we have a responsibility to protect the health of our people, while saving lives, reducing suffering, and supporting the health and dignity of people everywhere. America can make a significant difference in meeting these challenges, and that is why my administration is committed to act.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan and President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan
May 6, 2009

Well, thank you, everybody. We're going to be making formal remarks over there, but we just wanted to say that we've had an extraordinarily productive day. And what is represented around the table is not just three Presidents but rather it's ministers, agency heads at every level, and that reflects the kind of concrete cooperation and detail that is going to, ultimately, make a difference in improving opportunity and democracy and stability in Pakistan and in Afghanistan. So we'll see you guys over there.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:04 p.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan and President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan

May 6, 2009

Good afternoon, everybody. We just finished an important trilateral meeting among the United States, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. And earlier today I was pleased to have wide-ranging bilateral discussions with both President Karzai of Afghanistan and President Zardari of Pakistan.

We meet today as three sovereign nations joined by a common goal: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaida and its extremist allies in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their ability to operate in either country in the future. And to achieve that goal, we must deny them the space to threaten the Pakistani, Afghan, or American people. And we must also advance security and opportunity, so that Pakistanis and Afghans can pursue the promise of a better life.

And just over a month ago, I announced a new strategy to achieve these objectives after consultation with Pakistan, Afghanistan, and our other friends and allies. Our strategy reflects a fundamental truth: The security of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the United States are linked. In the weeks that have followed, that truth has only been reinforced. Al Qaida and its allies have taken more lives in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and have continued to challenge the democratically elected Governments of the two Presidents standing here today. Meanwhile, Al Qaida plots against the American people—and people around the world—from their safe haven along the border.

I'm pleased that these two men, elected leaders of Afghanistan and Pakistan, fully appreciate the seriousness of the threat that we face, and have reaffirmed their commitment to confronting it. And I'm pleased that we have advanced unprecedented cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan on a bilateral basis—and among Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the United States—which will benefit all of our people.

Today's meeting is the second in the trilateral dialogs among our countries, and these meetings will coordinate our efforts in a broad range of areas, across all levels of government. To give you a sense of the scope of this effort, Secretary Clinton, Attorney General Holder, Secretary Vilsack, Director Panetta, Director Mueller, and Deputy Secretary Lew will all host separate meetings with their Pakistani and Afghan counterparts. And these trilateral meetings build on efforts being made in the region and in the United States, and they will continue on a regular basis.

Now there's much to be done. Along the border where insurgents often move freely, we must work together with a renewed sense of partnership to share intelligence, and to coordinate our efforts to isolate, target, and take out our common enemy. But we must also meet the threat of extremism with a positive program of growth and opportunity. And that's why my administration is working with Members of Congress to create opportunity zones to spark development. That's why I'm proud that we've helped advance negotiations towards landmark transit-trade agreements to open Afghanistan and Pakistan borders to more commerce.

Within Afghanistan, we must help grow the economy, while developing alternatives to the drug trade by tapping the resilience and the ingenuity of the Afghan people. We must support free and open national elections later this fall, while helping to protect the hard-earned rights of all Afghans. And we must support the capacity of local governments, and stand up to corruption that blocks progress. I also made it clear that the United States will work with our Afghan and international partners to make every effort to avoid civilian casualties as we help the Afghan Government combat our common enemy.

And within Pakistan, we must provide lasting support to democratic institutions, while helping the Government confront the insurgents who are the single greatest threat to the Pakistani state. And we must do more than stand against those who would destroy Pakistan; we must stand with those who want to build Pakistan. And that is why I've asked Congress for sustained funding, to build schools and roads and hospitals. I want the Pakistani people to understand that America is not simply against

terrorism, we are on the side of their hopes and their aspirations, because we know that the future of Pakistan must be determined by the talent, innovation, and intelligence of its people.

I have long said that we cannot meet these challenges in isolation, nor delay the action, nor deny the resources necessary to get the job done. And that's why we have a comprehensive strategy for the region, with civilian and military components, led by Ambassador Richard Holbrooke and General David Petraeus. And for the first time, this strategy will be matched by the resources that it demands.

U.S. troops are serving courageously and capably, in a vital mission in Afghanistan, alongside our Afghan and international partners. But to combat an enemy that is on the offensive, we need more troops, training, and assistance. And that's why we are deploying 21,000 troops to Afghanistan, and increasing our efforts to train Afghan security forces. And I'm also pleased that our NATO allies and partners are providing resources to support our strategy. And that is why we are helping Pakistan combat the insurgency within its borders, including $400 million in immediate assistance that we are seeking from Congress, which will help the Government as it steps up its efforts against the extremists.

And to advance security, opportunity, and justice for the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan, we are dramatically increasing our civilian support for both countries. We were pleased that these efforts were recently amplified through the $5.5 billion that was pledged for Pakistan at an international donors conference in Tokyo; resources that will help meet the basic needs of the Pakistani people.

The road ahead will be difficult. There will be more violence, and there will be setbacks. But let me be clear: The United States has made a lasting commitment to defeat Al Qaida, but also, to support the democratically elected sovereign Governments of both Pakistan and Afghanistan. That commitment will not waiver, and that support will be sustained.

Every day, we see evidence of the future that Al Qaida and its allies offer. It's a future filled with violence and despair. It's a future without opportunity or hope. That's not what the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan want, and it's not what they deserve. The United States has a stake in the future of these two countries. We have learned, time and again, that our security is shared. It is a lesson that we learned most painfully on 9/11, and it is a lesson that we will not forget.

So we are here today in the midst of a great challenge. But no matter what happens, we will not be deterred. The aspirations of all our people—for security, for opportunity, and for justice—are far more powerful than any enemy. Those are the hopes that we hold in common for all of our children. So we will sustain our cooperation. And we will work for the day when our nations are linked, not by a common enemy, but by a shared peace and prosperity, mutual interests and mutual respect, not only among governments, but among our people.

I want to thank President Zardari and President Karzai for joining me here today. I look forward to continuing this close cooperation between our Governments in the months and years ahead. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:11 p.m. in the Grand Foyer at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr.; Secretary of Agriculture Thomas J. Vilsack; Leon E. Panetta, Director, Central Intelligence Agency; Robert S. Mueller III, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation; Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Jacob J. Lew; Richard C. Holbrooke, U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan; and Gen. David H. Petraeus, USA, commander, U.S. Central Command.

Message to the Congress Transmitting the Protocol Additional to the Agreement Between the United States of America and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the Application of Safeguards in the United States of America
May 5, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

I transmit herewith a list of the sites, locations, facilities, and activities in the United States that I intend to declare to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), under the Protocol Additional to the Agreement between the United States of America and the International Atomic Energy Agency for the Application of Safeguards in the United States of America, with Annexes, signed at Vienna on June 12, 1998 (the "U.S.-IAEA Additional Protocol"), and constitutes a report thereon, as required by section 271 of Public Law 109–401. In accordance with section 273 of Public Law 109–401, I hereby certify that:

(1) each site, location, facility, and activity included in the list has been examined by each department and agency with national security equities with respect to such site, location, facility, or activity; and

(2) appropriate measures have been taken to ensure that information of direct national security significance will not be compromised at any such site, location, facility, or activity in connection with an IAEA inspection.

The enclosed draft declaration lists each site, location, facility, and activity I intend to declare to the IAEA, and provides a detailed description of such sites, locations, facilities, and activities, and the provisions of the U.S.-IAEA Additional Protocol under which they would be declared. Each site, location, facility, and activity would be declared in order to meet the obligations of the United States of America with respect to these provisions.

The IAEA classification of the enclosed declaration is "Highly Confidential Safeguards Sensitive"; however, the United States regards this information as "Sensitive but Unclassified."

Nonetheless, under Public Law 109–401, information reported to, or otherwise acquired by, the United States Government under this title or under the U.S.-IAEA Additional Protocol shall be exempt from disclosure under section 552 of title 5, United States Code.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
May 5, 2009.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 7.

Remarks on the Federal Budget
May 7, 2009

Good morning, everybody. All across this country, Americans are responding to difficult economic times by tightening their belts and making tough decisions about where they need to spend and where they need to save. And the question the American people are asking is whether Washington is prepared to act with the same sense of responsibility.

I believe we can and must do exactly that. Over the course of our first hundred days in office, my administration has taken aggressive action to confront a historic economic crisis. We're doing everything that we can to create jobs and to get our economy moving while building a new foundation for lasting prosperity, a foundation that invests in quality education, lowers health care costs, and develops new sources of energy powered by new jobs and industries.

But one of the pillars of this foundation is fiscal responsibility. We can no longer afford to spend as if deficits don't matter and waste is not

our problem. We can no longer afford to leave the hard choices for the next budget, the next administration, or the next generation.

And that's why I've charged the Office of Management and Budget, led by Peter Orszag and Rob Nabors, who are standing behind me today, with going through the budget, program by program, item by item, line by line, looking for areas where we can save taxpayer dollars. Today the budget office is releasing the first report in this process, a list of more than 100 programs slated to be reduced or eliminated altogether. And the process is ongoing.

Now, I want to be clear: There are many, many people doing valuable work for our Government across the country and around the world. And it's important that we support these folks, people who don't draw big paycheck or earn a lot of praise but who do tough, thankless jobs on our behalf in our Government. So this is not a criticism of them. At the same time, we have to admit that there is a lot of money that's being spent inefficiently, ineffectively, and, in some cases, in ways that are actually pretty stunning.

Some programs may have made sense in the past, but are no longer needed in the present. Other programs never made any sense; the end result of a special interest's successful lobbying campaign. Still other programs perform functions that can be conducted more efficiently or are already carried out more effectively elsewhere in the Government.

One example of a program we will cut is a long-range radio navigation system which costs taxpayers $35 million a year. Now, this system once made a lot of sense, before there were satellites to help us navigate. Now there's GPS. And yet, year after year, this obsolete technology has continued to be funded, even though it serves no Government function and very few people are left who still actually use it.

Another example is the National Institute for Literacy. Now, I strongly support initiatives that promote literacy—it's critical—but I oppose programs that do it badly. Last year, nearly half of the funding in this program was spent on overhead. So we've proposed cutting the $6 million for this program in favor of supporting literacy efforts within the Department of Education which use tax dollars more effectively and wisely.

We're also closing an office maintained by the Department of Education in Paris. This is an office that costs hundreds of thousands of dollars to employ one person as a representative to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, or UNESCO. Now, participation in UNESCO is very important, but we can save this money and still participate, using e-mail and teleconferencing and a small travel budget.

In addition, we're going to save money by eliminating unnecessary defense programs that do nothing to keep us safe, but rather prevent us from spending money on what does keep us safe. One example is a $465 million program to build an alternate engine for the Joint Strike Fighter. The Defense Department is already pleased with the engine it has; the engine it has works. The Pentagon does not want and does not plan to use the alternative version. That's why the Pentagon stopped requesting this funding 2 years ago. Yet it's still being funded.

And these are just a few examples. But the point to remember is that there are consequences for this kind of spending. It makes the development of new tools for our military, like the Joint Strike Fighter, more expensive, even prohibitively so, and crowds out money that we could be using, for example, to improve our troops' quality of life and their safety and security. It makes Government less effective. It makes our Nation less resilient and less able to address immediate concerns and long-term challenges, and it leaves behind a massive burden for our children and grandchildren.

Now, some of the cuts we're putting forward today are more painful than others; some are larger than others. In fact, a few of the programs we eliminate will produce less than a million dollars in savings. And in Washington, I guess that's considered trivial. Outside of Washington, that's still considered a lot of money.

But these savings, large and small, add up. The 121 budget cuts we are announcing today

will save taxpayers nearly $17 billion next year alone. And even by Washington standards, that should be considered real money. To put this in perspective, this $17 billion is more than enough savings to pay for a $2,500 tuition tax credit for millions of students as well as a larger Pell grant, with enough money left over to pay for everything we do to pay for—to protect the national parks. And this is just one aspect of the budget reforms and savings we're seeking.

I've signed a Presidential memorandum to end unnecessary no-bid contracts and dramatically reform the way Government contracts are awarded, reform that will save the American people up to $40 billion each year.

Secretary Gates has proposed the elimination of expensive weapons systems ill-suited for the threats of the 21st century and a sweeping overhaul of a defense contracting system which has been riddled with hundreds of billions of dollars in waste and cost overruns. A proposal to accomplish these kinds of reforms, sponsored by Senators John McCain and Carl Levin in the Senate and Representatives Ike Skelton and John McHugh in the House, is advancing through Congress as we speak.

We're also going to eliminate the subsidies we provide to the health insurance companies through Medicare, saving roughly $22 billion each year starting in 2012, as part of a broader effort to reduce health care costs—essential to putting our Nation on a more secure fiscal footing.

All told, by the end of my first term, we will have cut the deficit in half. Over the next decade, we'll bring nondefense discretionary spending to its lowest level as a share of Gross Domestic Product since 1962. We will also continue to look for ways we can save taxpayer money. And I know there are many in both parties in Congress committed to cutting spending and eager to work with us.

And one important step is restoring the pay-as-you-go rule, and I've called on Congress to do exactly that. This rule says, very simply, that Congress can only spend a dollar if it saves a dollar elsewhere. This is the principle that guides responsible families managing a budget. This is the principle that helped transform large deficits into surpluses in the 1990s.

I've also asked my Cabinet to continue to scour their budgets looking for savings and to report their findings back to me. And I've proposed other creative ways to control spending. For example, we don't want agencies to protect bloated budgets; we want them to promote effective programs. So we'll allow agencies that identify savings to keep a portion of those savings to invest in programs that work within their agencies.

We're also making it possible for Government employees to submit their ideas for how their agency can save money and perform better. And we're going to reach beyond the halls of Government. Many businesses have innovative ways of using technology to save money; many experts have new ideas to make Government work more efficiently. Government can, and must, learn from them.

Finally, while these steps will help us cut our deficit in half over the next 4 years, we recognize that there remain looming challenges to our fiscal health beyond that, challenges that will require us to make health care more affordable and to work on a bipartisan basis to address programs like Social Security. So what we're proposing today does not replace the need for large changes in nondiscretionary spending.

It is important, though, for all of you as you're writing up these stories to recognize that $17 billion taken out of our discretionary nondefense budget as well as portions of our defense budget are significant; they mean something. Now, none of this will be easy. For every dollar we seek to save there will be those who have an interest in seeing it spent. That's how unnecessary programs survive year after year. That's how budgets swell. That's how the people's interest is slowly overtaken by the special interests. But at this moment, at this difficult time for our Nation, we can't accept business as usual. We can't accept anything less than a government ready to meet the challenges of our time.

We must build a government of the 21st century: a government that is more efficient and more effective; a government that does what we need to do it and nothing that we don't; a government that invests in our future without leaving behind enormous financial burdens that put

our future in jeopardy. And today we've taken an important step, albeit just a first step, towards building this kind of government, not just for this generation of Americans, but for the sake of generations to come.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:42 a.m. in the Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Peter R. Orszag, Director, and Robert L. Nabors, Deputy Director, Office of Management and Budget.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey V. Lavrov of Russia
May 7, 2009

President Obama. I just want to make a brief statement. I just had an excellent conversation with Minister Lavrov. He and Secretary Clinton and the rest of our foreign policy teams have been meeting throughout the day. This caps off many of these conversations, all in preparation for a visit that President Medvedev and I have discussed to take place sometime this summer.

As I've said before, I think we have an excellent opportunity to reset the relationship between the United States and Russia on a whole host of issues, from nuclear weapons and nuclear proliferation, the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan, how we approach Iran, how we approach the Middle East, commercial ties between the two countries, and how we address the financial crisis that has put such a strain on the economies of all countries around the world.

And President Medvedev has an excellent representative in Minister Lavrov. We very much appreciate his strong work in trying to move the relationship forward, and I am hopeful that the meetings that we've had so far and the meetings that we expect to have throughout the course of this year will be of mutual benefit to both countries.

So thank you very much for taking the time.

Foreign Minister Lavrov. Thank you, Mr. President. And I just would like briefly to reiterate that we are indeed working very hard on developing the documents which you and President Medvedev authorized us to do when you met in London. I think we work in a very pragmatic, businesslike way on the basis of the common interest whenever our positions coincide and on the basis of respect to each other whenever we have disagreements, trying to narrow those disagreements for the benefit of our countries and the international stability.

And I can convey to you once again that President Medvedev is really looking forward to meeting you in Moscow this July.

President Obama. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:40 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Actions of the Government of Syria
May 7, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act, 50 U.S.C. 1622(d), provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency, unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the Federal Register and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the Federal Register for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency with respect to the actions of the Government

of Syria declared in Executive Order 13338 of May 11, 2004, and relied upon for additional steps taken in Executive Order 13399 of April 25, 2006, and Executive Order 13460 of February 13, 2008, is to continue in effect beyond May 11, 2009.

The actions of the Government of Syria in supporting terrorism, pursuing weapons of mass destruction and missile programs, and undermining U.S. and international efforts with respect to the stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue in effect the national emergency declared with respect to this threat and to maintain in force the sanctions to address this national emergency.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
May 7, 2009.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 8. The notice of May 7 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Message to the Congress Transmitting the Budget of the United States Government for Fiscal Year 2010
May 7, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

I have the honor to transmit to you the Budget of the United States Government for Fiscal Year 2010.

In my February 26th budget overview, *A New Era of Responsibility: Renewing America's Promise*, I provided a broad outline of how our Nation came to this moment of economic, financial, and fiscal crisis; and how my Administration plans to move this economy from recession to recovery and lay a new foundation for long-term economic growth and prosperity. This Budget fills out this picture by providing full programmatic details and proposing appropriations language and other required information for the Congress to put these plans fully into effect.

Specifically, this Budget details the pillars of the stable and broad economic growth we seek: making long overdue investments and reforms in education so that every child can compete in the global economy, undertaking health care reform so that we can control costs while boosting coverage and quality, and investing in renewable sources of energy so that we can reduce our dependence on foreign oil and become the world leader in the new clean energy economy.

Fiscal discipline is another critical pillar in this economic foundation. My Administration came into office facing a budget deficit of $1.3 trillion for this year alone, and the cost of confronting the recession and financial crisis has been high. While these are extraordinary times that have demanded extraordinary responses, it is impossible to put our Nation on a course for long-term growth without beginning to rein in unsustainable deficits and debt. We no longer can afford to tolerate investments in programs that are outdated, duplicative, ineffective, or wasteful.

That is why the Budget I am sending to you includes a separate volume of terminations, reductions, and savings that my Administration has identified since we sent the budget overview to you 10 weeks ago. In it, we identify programs that do not accomplish the goals set for them, do not do so efficiently, or do a job already done by another initiative. Overall, we have targeted more than 100 programs that should be ended or substantially changed, moves that will save nearly $17 billion next year alone.

These efforts are just the next phase of a larger and longer effort needed to change how Washington does business and put our fiscal house in order. To that end, the Budget

includes billions of dollars in savings from steps ranging from ending subsidies for big oil and gas companies, to eliminating entitlements to banks and lenders making student loans. It provides an historic down payment on health care reform, the key to our long-term fiscal future, and was constructed without commonly used budget gimmicks that, for instance, hide the true costs of war and natural disasters. Even with these costs on the books, the Budget will cut the deficit in half by the end of my first term, and we will bring non-defense discretionary spending to its lowest level as a share of GDP since 1962.

Finally, in order to keep America strong and secure, the Budget includes critical investments in rebuilding our military, securing our homeland, and expanding our diplomatic efforts because we need to use all elements of our power to provide for our national security. We are not only proposing significant funding for our national security, but also being careful with those investments by, for instance, reforming defense contracting so that we are using our defense dollars to their maximum effect.

I have little doubt that there will be various interests—vocal and powerful—who will oppose different aspects of this Budget. Change is never easy. However, I believe that after an era of profound irresponsibility, Americans are ready to embrace the shared responsibilities we have to each other and to generations to come. They want to put old arguments and the divisions of the past behind us, put problem-solving ahead of point-scoring, and reconstruct an economy that is built on a solid new foundation. If we do that, America once again will teem with new industry and commerce, hum with the energy of new discoveries and inventions, and be a place where anyone with a good idea and the will to work can live their dreams.

I am gratified and encouraged by the support I have received from the Congress thus far, and I look forward to working with you in the weeks ahead as we put these plans into practice and make this vision of America a reality.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
May 7, 2009.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 8.

Remarks on the National Economy and Job Training
May 8, 2009

Good morning, everybody. This morning we learned that our economy lost another 539,000 jobs in the month of April. And while it's somewhat encouraging that this number is lower than it's been in each of the past 6 months, it's still a sobering toll. The unemployment rate is at its highest point in 25 years. It underscores the point that we're still in the midst of a recession that was years in the making and will be months or even years in the unmaking. And we should expect further job losses in the months to come.

Although we have a long way to go before we can put this recession behind us, the gears of our economic engine do appear to slowly—to be slowly turning once again. Consumer spending and home sales are stabilizing; construction spending is up for the first time in 6 months. So step by step, we're beginning to make progress.

Of course, that's no solace to those who've lost their jobs or to the small-business owners whose hearts break at letting long-time employees go. It's no relief for those who continue to send out resume after resume and then wait for a call. And it's of little comfort to the families who wake up wondering how they're going to pay their bills, stay in their homes, or put food on the table, the Americans I've met in towns across this country or whose letters I read every night.

They're letters of struggle, but they're also of service to others. They're stories of heartbreak, but they're also stories of hope. It's the

story of the small-business owner in California who wrote that as long as her employees depend on her, "I will not give up." That's what she said. The veteran in Oklahoma who wrote: "We've all got a long way to go, but we'll stick together and get through this." Or the mother in Michigan who wrote that she and her husband can't make ends meet, but as long as they have their jobs, they'll work 24 hours a day to send their children to college. This woman ended her letter by saying: "I'm not writing to tell you about my troubles. I'm writing to please ask you to act quickly to help all the people like me."

Such hard-working Americans are why I ran for President. They're the reason we've been working swiftly and aggressively across all fronts to turn this economy around, to jump-start spending and hiring and create jobs where we can with steps like the Recovery Act. And because of this plan, cops are still on the beat and teachers are still in the classroom, shovels are breaking ground and cranes dot the sky, and new life has been breathed into private companies like Sharon Arnold's. And already, 95 percent of working Americans are seeing a tax cut that we promised would show up in their paychecks.

We're moving forward because now is not the time for small plans. It's not a time to pause or to be passive or to wait around for our problems to somehow fix themselves. Now is the time to put a new foundation for growth in place, to rebuild our economy, to retrain our workforce, and reequip the American people. And now is the time to change unemployment from a period of wait-and-see to a chance for our workers to train and seek the next opportunity, so when that new and better day does come around, our people, our industry, and our entire country are ready to make the most of it.

Now, if we want to come out of this recession stronger than before, we need to make sure that our workforce is better prepared than ever before. Right now, someone who doesn't have a college degree is more than twice as likely to be unemployed as someone who does. And so many of the Americans who have lost their jobs can't find new ones because they simply don't have the skills and the training they need for the jobs they want.

In a 21st century economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, education is the single best bet we can make, not just for our individual success, but for the success of the Nation as a whole. The average college graduate earns 80 percent more than those who stopped after high school. So if we want to help people not only get back on their feet today but prosper tomorrow, we need to take a rigorous new approach to higher education and technical training. And that starts by changing senseless rules that discourage displaced workers from getting the education and training they need to find and fill the jobs of the future.

So today I'm announcing new steps we are taking to do exactly that, to give people across America who have lost their jobs the chance to go back to school today to get retrained for the jobs and industries of tomorrow. The idea here is to fundamentally change our approach to unemployment in this country so that it's no longer just a time to look for a new job but is also a time to prepare yourself for a better job. That's what our unemployment system should be, not just a safety net, but a stepping stone to a new future. It should offer folks educational opportunities they wouldn't otherwise have, giving them the measurable and differentiated skills they need just—not just to get through hard times, but to get ahead when the economy comes back.

And that's what Maureen Pike did. Maureen lost her job as a physician's receptionist, but she didn't lose hope. She took it as an opportunity to upgrade her skills and earned an associate's degree in nursing from a community college. As a consequence, today, she works as a registered nurse.

The only reason she could afford to do that while supporting her twins was because the State of Maine allowed her to keep her unemployment benefits and study with the help from a Pell grant. Pell grants cover tuition at almost every community college in the country, and unemployment benefits can help those studying to gain new skills to support their families at the same time.

But today, far too many Americans are denied that opportunity. Let me just give you an example. Say an unemployed factory worker wants to upgrade his skills to become a mechanic or a technician. In many States, that worker might lose temporary financial support if he enrolls in a training program. And to make matters worse, unemployment might mean he can't afford higher education, and he likely won't qualify for Federal help simply because he may have made a decent salary a year ago, before he was laid off.

Well, that doesn't make much sense for our economy or our country. So we're going to change it. First, we'll open new doors to higher education and job training programs to recently laid-off workers who are receiving unemployment benefits. And if those displaced workers need help paying for their education, they should get it, and that's why the next step is to make it easier for them to receive Pell grants of the sort that Maureen used.

I've asked my Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, and my Secretary of Labor, Hilda Solis, to work closely with States and our institutions of higher learning and encourage them not only to allow these changes but to inform all workers receiving unemployment benefits of the training programs and financial support open to them. And together, the Department of Education and the Department of Labor have created a new web site called opportunity.gov—I'll repeat that, opportunity.gov—to help workers discover and take advantage of these opportunities.

And together, these changes will increase access to education and opportunity for hundreds of thousands of workers who've been stung by this recession, people just like Maureen. And like her, many may take advantage of one of America's underappreciated assets, and that's our community colleges. And these schools offer practical education and technical training, and they're increasingly important centers of learning where Americans can prepare for the jobs of the future.

And that's also why I'm asking Dr. Jill Biden, a community college professor who's devoted her entire life to education—and who happens to be married to the Vice President—to lead a national effort to raise awareness about what we're doing to open the doors to our community colleges.

So I think this is one more piece of the puzzle. It's a good start. It is only a start, though. These steps are just a short-term downpayment on our larger goal of ensuring that all Americans get the skills and education they need to succeed in today's economy. And to that end, I have asked, once again, every American to commit to at least 1 year or more of higher education or career training. It can be community college or a 4-year school, vocational training or an apprenticeship, but whatever the training may be, every American will need to get more than a high school diploma. And we will be backing up that effort with the support necessary. And we will ensure that by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world.

In the weeks to come, I will also lay out a fundamental rethinking of our job training, vocational education, and community college programs. It's time to move beyond the idea that we need several different programs to address several different problems. We need one comprehensive policy that addresses our comprehensive challenges.

And that's how we'll open the doors of opportunity and lay a new foundation for our economic growth, by investing in our citizens. That's how we've always emerged from tough times stronger than before, because of the hard work and determination and ingenuity of the American people. And I am confident that if we summon that spirit once again, we will get through this; we will see our Nation recover; and together, along with folks like Maureen and Sharon, we're going to put America on the path to shared and lasting prosperity once again.

Thank you very much everybody. Have a great weekend.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:38 a.m. in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower

Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Sharon Arnold, president, Scott and Sharon Arnold's Contracting Company, Inc.; and Maureen Pike, registered nurse, Calais Regional Hospital, who introduced the President.

Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting on the Global Influenza Outbreak
May 8, 2009

Hello, everybody. *Hola*. Thank you. Please, everybody have a seat. *Muchas gracias*. Thank you very much. Now, please, everybody have a seat. Now, I don't want to take up too much time. I just wanted to stop by and let you know how important I think this is.

Obviously, all of us are concerned about the health of our families and our children. And our experience with the H1N1 virus over the last couple of weeks is a sobering reminder of how vital it is that we all recognize we're all in this together. We're one country; we're one community. When one person gets sick, that has the potential of making us all sick. And when we help to make everybody well—one person well, then everybody has the potential to get well. We can't be divided by communities.

And that means that Government at every level has to make sure that good information is getting out to every part of the broader American community. And that's part of the reason why we wanted to do this today. It's our first step in making sure that whenever we have a public health issue that has to be addressed, that everybody is on the same page.

So I want to ensure everybody that we're seeing that the virus may not have been as virulent as we at first feared, but we're not out of the woods yet, and we still have to take precautions. Many of you are community leaders; obviously, those who are viewing this on television are going to be able to give information to your friends and family about washing your hands, about covering your mouths, staying home if you're sick, keeping children home from school if they're sick. That kind of commonsense approach can make all the difference in the world.

And so I just want to thank the Center for Disease Control. They've been vigilant on this issue. They believe that we're going to have to keep on taking some precautions, and we may have to prepare for even worse flu season sometime in the fall. This H1N1 flu, obviously, has hit Mexico much more badly than it's hit us so far. And I've been working very closely—I spoke to President Calderon last weekend to ensure that we were providing Mexico with the assistance that it needed, because one of the things that we have to understand is public health issues like this—not only is it important for all communities within the United States to be working together, it's also important to be working internationally together.

So I'm very proud of this first White House town hall meeting conducted entirely in Spanish. I am grateful—except for my part. [*Laughter*] You know, I'm kind of messing up the whole thing. [*Laughter*] I'm grateful for Univision for hosting us, and I'm happy to see that we've got officials from many different departments, including my Secretary of Labor, Hilda Solis.

So I want to let you continue with your conversation. I hope you've learned something. Please ask questions—these folks are extraordinarily well informed—and then distribute the information that you've learned from this town hall throughout your communities. And this is just the first of many, I hope, mechanisms for outreach that will improve the quality of service that the White House provides to the American people.

So *muchas gracias*. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:24 p.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

The President's Weekly Address
May 9, 2009

Good morning. I want to briefly share some news about our economy and talk about the work that we're doing both to protect American consumers and to put our economy back on a path to growth and prosperity.

This week, we saw some signs that the gears of America's economic engine are slowly beginning to turn. Consumer spending and home sales are stabilizing. Unemployment claims are dropping and job losses are beginning to slow. But these trends are far from satisfactory. The unemployment rate is at its highest point in 25 years. We're still in the midst of a deep recession that was years in the making, and it will take time to fully turn this economy around.

We cannot rest until our work is done, not when Americans continue to lose their jobs and struggle to pay their bills, not when we are wrestling with record deficits and an overburdened middle class. And that's why every action that my administration is taking is focused on clearing away the wreckage of this recession and building a new foundation for job creation and long-term growth.

This past week, we acted on several fronts. To restart the flow of credit that businesses and individuals depend upon, we completed an unprecedented review of the conditions of our Nation's largest banks to determine what additional steps are necessary to get our economy moving. To restore fiscal discipline, we identified 121 programs to eliminate from our budget. And to restore a sense of fairness to our Tax Code and common sense to our economy, I have asked Congress to work with me in closing the loopholes that let companies ship jobs and stash profits overseas, reforms that will help save $210 billion over the next 10 years.

These important steps are just one part of a broad effort to get government, businesses, and banks to act more responsibly, so that we're creating good jobs and making sound investments instead of spending recklessly and padding false profits, because American institutions must act with the same sense of responsibility and fairness that the American people aspire to in their own lives.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in our credit card industry. Americans know that they have a responsibility to live within their means and pay what they owe. But they also have a right not to get ripped off by the sudden rate hikes, unfair penalties, and hidden fees that have become all too common in our credit card industry. You shouldn't have to fear that any new credit card is going to come with strings attached, nor should you need a magnifying glass and a reference book to read a credit card application. And the abuses in our credit card industry have only multiplied in the midst of this recession, when Americans can least afford to bear an extra burden.

It is past time for rules that are fair and transparent. And that's why I've called for a set of new principles to reform our credit card industry. Instead of an anything-goes approach, we need strong and reliable protections for consumers. Instead of fine print that hides the truth, we need credit card forms and statements that have plain language in plain sight, and we need to give people the tools they need to find a credit card that meets their needs. And instead of abuse that goes unpunished, we need to strengthen monitoring, enforcement, and penalties for credit card companies that take advantage of ordinary Americans.

The House has taken important steps towards putting these principles into law, and the Senate is poised to do the same next week. Now, I'm calling on Congress to take final action to pass a credit card reform bill that protects American consumers so that I can sign it into law by Memorial Day. There's no time for delay. We need a durable and successful flow of credit in our economy, but we can't tolerate profits that depend on misleading working families. Those days are over.

Now, this economic crisis has reminded us that we are all in this together. We can't prosper by putting off hard choices or by protecting the profits of the few at the expense of the middle class. We're making steady

progress towards recovery, but we must ensure that the legacy of this recession is an American economy that rewards work and innovation, that's guided by fairness and responsibility, and that grows steadily into the future.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 12 p.m. on May 8 in the Secretary of War Room at the White House for broadcast on May 9. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 8 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 9.

Remarks at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner
May 9, 2009

Thank you. Thank you, everybody. Good evening. You know, I had an entire speech prepared for this wonderful occasion, but now that I'm here, I think I'm going to try something a little different. Tonight I want to speak from the heart; I'm going to speak off the cuff.

[*At this point, two teleprompters appeared, followed by laughter and applause.*]

Good evening. [*Laughter*] Pause for laughter. [*Laughter*] Wait a minute. This may not be working as well as I—[*laughter*]. Let me try that again.

Good evening, everybody. I would like to welcome you all to the 10-day anniversary of my first 100 days. [*Laughter*] I am Barack Obama. Most of you covered me; all of you voted for me. [*Laughter*] Apologies to the FOX table. [*Laughter*] They're—where are they? I have to confess, I really did not want to be here tonight, but I knew I had to come—just one more problem that I've inherited from George W. Bush. [*Laughter*]

But now that I'm here, it's great to be here. It's great to see all of you. Michelle Obama is here, First Lady of the United States. Hasn't she been an outstanding First Lady? She's even begun to bridge the differences that have divided us for so long, because no matter which party you belong to, we can all agree that Michelle has the right to bear arms. [*Laughter*]

Now, Sasha and Malia aren't here tonight because they're grounded. You can't just take Air Force One on a joy ride to Manhattan. [*Laughter*] I don't care whose kids you are. [*Laughter*] We've been setting some ground rules here. They're starting to get a little carried away.

And—now, speaking—when I think about children, obviously, I think about Michelle, and it reminds me that tomorrow is Mother's Day. Happy Mother's Day to all the mothers in the audience. I do have to say, though, that this is a tough holiday for Rahm Emanuel because he's not used to saying the word "day" after "mother." [*Laughter*] That's true. [*Laughter*]

David Axelrod is here. You know, David and I have been together for a long time. I can still remember—I got to sort of—I tear up a little bit when I think back to that day that I called Ax so many years ago and said, "You and I can do wonderful things together." And he said to me the same thing that partners all across America are saying to one another right now: "Let's go to Iowa and make it official." [*Laughter*]

Michael Steele is in the house tonight, or as he would say, "in the heezy." [*Laughter*] What's up? [*Laughter*] Where is Michael? Is he—Michael, for the last time, the Republican Party does not qualify for a bailout. [*Laughter*] Rush Limbaugh does not count as a troubled asset, I'm sorry. [*Laughter*]

Dick Cheney was supposed to be here, but he is very busy working on his memoirs, tentatively titled, "How to Shoot Friends and Interrogate People." [*Laughter*]

You know, it's been a whirlwind of activity these first 100 days. We've enacted a major economic recovery package; we passed a budget; we forged a new path in Iraq; and no President in history has ever named three Commerce Secretaries this quickly. [*Laughter*] Which reminds me, if Judd Gregg is here, your business cards are ready now. [*Laughter*]

On top of that, I've also reversed the ban on stem cell research, signed an expansion of the children's health insurance. And just last week, Car and Driver named me auto executive of the year. [*Laughter*] Something I'm very proud of.

We've also begun to change the culture in Washington. We've even made the White House a place where people can learn and can grow. Just recently, Larry Summers asked if he could chair the White House Council on Women and Girls. [*Laughter*] And I do appreciate that Larry is here tonight because it is 7 hours past his bedtime. [*Laughter*] Gibbs liked that one. [*Laughter*]

In the last 100 days, we've also grown the Democratic Party by infusing it with new energy and bringing in fresh, young faces like Arlen Specter. [*Laughter*] Now, Joe Biden rightly deserves a lot of credit for convincing Arlen to make the switch, but Secretary Clinton actually had a lot to do with it too. One day she just pulled him aside, and she said, "Arlen, you know what I always say: 'If you can't beat them, join them.' " [*Laughter*]

Which brings me to another thing that's changed in this new, warmer, fuzzier White House, and that's my relationship with Hillary. You know, we had been rivals during the campaign, but these days we could not be closer. In fact, the second she got back from Mexico she pulled me into a hug and gave me a big kiss. [*Laughter*] Told me I'd better get down there myself—[*laughter*]—which I really appreciated. I mean, it was nice. [*Laughter*]

And of course, we've also begun to change America's image in the world. We talked about this during this campaign, and we're starting to execute. We've renewed alliances with important partners and friends.

[*A photo was shown.*]

If you look on the screen there, there I am with Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso.

[*A second photo was shown.*]

There I am with Gordon Brown.

But as I said during the campaign, we can't just talk to our friends. As hard as it is, we also have to talk to our enemies, and I've begun to do exactly that.

[*A third photo was shown of President Obama talking to a pirate.*]

Take a look at the monitor there. [*Laughter*]

Now, let me be clear: Just because he handed me a copy of "Peter Pan" does not mean that I'm going to read it—[*laughter*]—but it's good diplomatic practice to just accept these gifts.

All this change hasn't been easy. Change never is. So I've cut the tension by bringing a new friend to the White House. He's warm; he's cuddly, loyal, enthusiastic. You just have to keep him on a tight leash. Every once in a while he goes charging off in the wrong direction and gets himself into trouble, but enough about Joe Biden. [*Laughter*]

All in all, we're proud of the change we've brought to Washington in these first 100 days, but we've got a lot of work left to do, as all of you know. So I'd like to talk a little bit about what my administration plans to achieve in the next 100 days.

During the second 100 days, we will design, build, and open a library dedicated to my first 100 days. [*Laughter*] It's going to be big, folks. [*Laughter*] In the next 100 days, I will learn to go off the prompter and Joe Biden will learn to stay on the prompter. [*Laughter*]

In the next 100 days, our bipartisan outreach will be so successful that even John Boehner will consider becoming a Democrat. After all, we have a lot in common. He is a person of color—[*laughter*]—although not a color that appears in the natural world. [*Laughter*] What's up, John? [*Laughter*]

In the next 100 days, I will meet with a leader who rules over millions with an iron fist, who owns the airwaves, and uses his power to crush all who would challenge his authority at the ballot box. It's good to see you, Mayor Bloomberg. [*Laughter*]

In the next 100 days, we will housetrain our dog, Bo, because the last thing Tim Geithner needs is someone else treating him like a fire hydrant. [*Laughter*] In the next 100 days, I will strongly consider losing my cool. [*Laughter*]

Finally, I believe that my next 100 days will be so successful I will be able to complete them in 72 days. [*Laughter*] And on the 73d day, I will rest. [*Laughter*]

I just—I want to end by saying a few words about the men and women in this room whose job it is to inform the public and pursue the truth. You know, we meet tonight at a moment of extraordinary challenge for this Nation and for the world, but it's also a time of real hardship for the field of journalism. And like so many other businesses in this global age, you've seen sweeping changes and technology and communications that lead to a sense of uncertainty and anxiety about what the future will hold.

Across the country, there are extraordinary, hard-working journalists who have lost their jobs in recent days, recent weeks, recent months. And I know that each newspaper and media outlet is wrestling with how to respond to these changes, and some are struggling simply to stay open. And it won't be easy. Not every ending will be a happy one.

But it's also true that your ultimate success as an industry is essential to the success of our democracy. It's what makes this thing work. You know, Thomas Jefferson once said that if he had the choice between a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, he would not hesitate to choose the latter.

And clearly, Thomas Jefferson never had cable news to contend with—[*laughter*]—but his central point remains: A government without newspapers, a government without a tough and vibrant media of all sorts, is not an option for the United States of America.

So I may not agree with everything you write or report. I may even complain, or more likely Gibbs will complain, from time to time about how you do your jobs, but I do so with the knowledge that when you are at your best, then you help me be at my best. You help all of us who serve at the pleasure of the American people do our jobs better by holding us accountable, by demanding honesty, by preventing us from taking shortcuts and falling into easy political games that people are so desperately weary of.

And that kind of reporting is worth preserving, not just for your sake, but for the public's. We count on you to help us make sense of a complex world and tell the stories of our lives the way they happen, and we look for you for truth, even if it's always an approximation, even if—[*laughter*].

This is a season of renewal and reinvention. That is what government must learn to do; that's what businesses must learn to do; and that's what journalism is in the process of doing. And when I look out at this room and think about the dedicated men and women whose questions I've answered over the last few years, I know that for all the challenges this industry faces, it's not short on talent or creativity or passion or commitment. It's not short of young people who are eager to break news or the not-so-young who still manage to ask the tough ones time and time again. These qualities alone will not solve all your problems, but they certainly prove that the problems are worth solving. And that is a good place as any to begin.

So I offer you my thanks, I offer you my support, and I look forward to working with you and answering to you and the American people as we seek a more perfect union in the months and years ahead.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:56 p.m. at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to White House Chief of Staff Rahm I. Emanuel; Senior Adviser to the President David Axelrod; Michael S. Steele, chairman, Republican National Committee; radio show host Rush Limbaugh; former Vice President Richard B. Cheney; Lawrence H. Summers, Director, National Economic Council; White House Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs; Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom; Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg of New York City; and Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 10.

Remarks on Health Care Reform
May 11, 2009

Hello, everyone. All right, well, I just concluded a extraordinarily productive meeting with organizations and associations that are going to be essential to the work of health care reform in this country, groups that represent everyone from union members to insurance companies, from doctors and hospitals to pharmaceutical companies. It was a meeting that focused largely on one of the central challenges that we must confront as we seek to achieve comprehensive reform and lay a new foundation for our economy, and that is the spiraling cost of health care in this country.

They're here because they recognize one clear, indisputable fact: When it comes to health care spending, we are on an unsustainable course that threatens the financial stability of families, businesses, and government itself. This is not news to the American people, who, over the last decade, have seen their out-of-pocket expenses soar, health care costs rise, and premiums double at a rate four times faster than their wages.

Today, half of all personal bankruptcies stem from medical expenses. And too many Americans are skipping that checkup they know they should get, or going without that prescription that would make them feel better, or finding some other way to scrimp and save on their health care expenses.

What is a growing crisis for the American people is also becoming an untenable burden for American businesses. Rising health care costs are commanding more and more of the money that our companies could be using to innovate and to grow, making it harder for them to compete around the world. These costs are leading the small businesses that are responsible for half of all private sector jobs to drop coverage for their workers at an alarming rate.

And, finally, the explosion in health care costs has put our Federal budget on a disastrous path. This is largely due to what we're spending on Medicare and Medicaid, entitlement programs whose costs are expected to continue climbing in the years ahead as baby boomers grow older and come to rely more and more on our health care system. That's why I've said repeatedly that getting health care costs under control is essential to reducing budget deficits, restoring fiscal discipline, and putting our economy on a path towards sustainable growth and shared prosperity.

We as a nation are now spending a far larger share of our national wealth on health care than we were a generation ago. At the rate we're going, we are expected to spend one fifth of our economy on health care within a decade. And yet, we're getting less for our money. In fact, we're spending more on health care than any other nation on Earth, even though millions of Americans don't have the affordable, quality care they deserve, and nearly 46 million Americans don't have any health insurance at all.

This problem didn't just appear overnight. For decades, Washington has debated what to do about this. For decades, we've talked about reducing costs, improving care, and providing coverage to uninsured Americans. But all too often, efforts at reform have fallen victim to special interest lobbying aimed at keeping things the way they are, to political point-scoring that sees health care not as a moral issue or an economic issue but as a wedge issue, and to a failure on all sides to come together on behalf of the American people.

And that's what makes today's meeting so remarkable, because it's a meeting that might not have been held just a few years ago. The groups who are here today represent different constituencies with different sets of interests. They've not always seen eye to eye with each other or with our Government on what needs to be done to reform health care in this country. In fact, some of these groups were among the strongest critics of past plans for comprehensive reform.

But what's brought us all together today is a recognition that we can't continue down the same dangerous road we've been traveling for so many years, that costs are out of control, and that reform is not a luxury that can be

postponed, but a necessity that cannot wait. It's a recognition that the fictional television couple, Harry and Louise, who became the iconic faces of those who opposed health care reform in the nineties desperately need health care reform in 2009. And so does America.

And that's why these groups are voluntarily coming together to make an unprecedented commitment. Over the next 10 years, from 2010 to 2019, they are pledging to cut the rate of growth of national health care spending by 1.5 percentage points each year, an amount that's equal to over $2 trillion—$2 trillion.

Their efforts will help us take the next and most important step, comprehensive health care reform, so that we can do what I pledged to do as a candidate and save a typical family an average of $2,500 on their health care costs in the coming years. Let me repeat that point: What they're doing is complementary to and is going to be completely compatible with a strong, aggressive effort to move health care reform through here in Washington with an ultimate result of saving health care costs for families, businesses, and the Government. That's how we can finally make health care affordable, while putting more money into the pockets of hard-working families each month. These savings can be achieved by standardizing quality care, incentivizing efficiency, investing in proven ways not only to treat illness but to prevent them.

This is a historic day, a watershed event in the long and elusive quest for health care reform. And as these groups take the steps they are outlining, and as we work with Congress on health care reform legislation, my administration will continue working to reduce health care costs to achieve similar savings. By curbing waste, fraud, and abuse and preventing avoidable hospital readmissions and taking a whole host of other cost-saving steps, we can save billions of dollars, while delivering better care to the American people.

Now, none of these steps can be taken by our Federal Government or our health care community acting alone. They'll require all of us coming together, as we are today, around a common purpose: workers, executives, hospitals, nurses, doctors, drug companies, insurance companies, Members of Congress. It's the kind of broad coalition, everybody with a seat at the table that I talked about during the campaign, that is required to achieve meaningful health care reform and that is the kind of coalition which—to which I am committed.

So the steps that are being announced today are significant. But the only way these steps will have an enduring impact is if they are taken not in isolation, but as part of a broader effort to reform our entire health care system. We've already begun making a downpayment on that kind of comprehensive reform. We're extending quality health care to millions of children of working families who lack coverage, which means we're going to be preventing long-term problems that are even more expensive to treat down the road. We're providing a COBRA subsidy to make health care affordable for 7 million Americans who lose their jobs. And because much of every health care dollar is spent on billing, overhead, and administration, we are computerizing medical records in a way that will protect our privacy, and that's a step that will not only eliminate waste and reduce medical errors that cost lives, but also let doctors spend less time doing administrative work and more time caring for patients.

But there's so much more to do. In the coming weeks and months, Congress will be engaged in the difficult issue of how best to reform health care in America. I'm committed to building a transparent process where all views are welcome. But I'm also committed to ensuring that whatever plan we design upholds three basic principles. First, the rising cost of health care must be brought down. Second, Americans must have the freedom to keep whatever doctor and health care plan they have or to choose a new doctor or health care plan if they want it. And third, all Americans must have quality, affordable health care.

These are principles that I expect to see upheld in any comprehensive health care reform bill that's sent to my desk; I mentioned it to the groups that were here today. It's reform that is an imperative for America's economic future, and reform that is a pillar of the new foundation we seek to build for our economy, reform that

we can, must, and will achieve by the end of this year.

Now, ultimately, the debate about reducing costs—and the larger debate about health care reform itself—is not just about numbers; it's not just about forms or systems; it's about our own lives and the lives of our loved ones. And I understand that. As I've mentioned before during the course of the campaign, my mother passed away from ovarian cancer a little over a decade ago. And in the last weeks of her life, when she was coming to grips with her own mortality and showing extraordinary courage just to get through each day, she was spending too much time worrying about whether her health insurance would cover her bills. So I know what it's like to see a loved one who is suffering, but also having to deal with a broken health care system. I know that pain is shared by millions of Americans all across this country.

And that's why I was committed to health care reform as a Presidential candidate, that's why health care reform is a key priority to this Presidency, that's why I will not rest until the dream of health care reform is finally achieved in the United States of America. And that's why I'm thrilled to have such a broad, diverse group of individuals from all across the health care spectrum representing every constituency and every political predisposition who feel that same sense of urgency and are committing themselves to work diligently to bring down costs so we can achieve the reforms that we seek.

So thank you very much to all of you for being here. Thank you very much everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:35 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House.

Remarks Honoring the 2009 NCAA Men's Basketball Champion University of North Carolina Tar Heels
May 11, 2009

The President. Hello. Well, thank you, everybody. Please have a seat. We're not in the Dean Dome here, you don't need to stay standing the whole time. [*Laughter*] I want to, first of all, just acknowledge that we've got a few special guests in the audience. We've got the outstanding new Senator from North Carolina, Kay Hagan. We've got some outstanding Members of the House of Representatives, G.K. Butterfield—[*applause*]—G.K. Brad Miller; Mike McIntyre—[*applause*]—with his Tar Heels cap on. And we've also got Mr. Roy Cooper, North Carolina attorney general, and a Tar Heel alum. Where is Roy? He's over there? As well as Kevin Foy, the mayor of Chapel Hill. There he is, right over there.

Well, welcome to the White House, everybody, and congratulations on bringing Carolina its fifth national championship. And more importantly, thanks for salvaging my bracket—[*laughter*]—and vindicating me before the entire Nation. That first round was rough on me. [*Laughter*] But Andy Katz knows that I came through in the end because of you guys. And I want to congratulate everybody who makes this program run, from the assistants to the trainers, the students to the ticket takers, and Tar Heel fans everywhere—you should all be very proud. And by the way, I have a few Tar Heel fans on my staff. I see a couple of them standing right here.

I want to offer special congratulations to the seven seniors who graduated yesterday: Mike Copeland, Bobby Frasor, Danny Green, Tyler Hansbrough, Patrick Moody, J.B. Tanner, and Jack Wooten. I am proud of all of you. Give them a big round of applause.

I have to tell you, everybody on my staff was really excited about the team coming, except my assistant, Reggie Love. [*Laughter*] Reggie did win his own national championship ring while playing at Duke. And at some point he wants to scrimmage with you guys, so we'll arrange for that.

But I want to thank Coach Roy Williams, and his wife Wanda, who is extraordinarily gracious, and I just had a wonderful time visiting with them. What makes Coach Williams one

of the great coaches isn't just his extraordinary record, but his dedication to his players. He's just as serious about making these guys into men and into leaders as he is into making them champions.

Now, I did have a chance to play ball with this crew just over a year ago when I visited Chapel Hill. And I'm not sure whose luck rubbed off on who. I think there was just a good vibe going on there, because they're now national champions, and I'm now President. And I remember congratulating Tyler on choosing to forego the NBA draft and coming back to get that ring. And after winning the 2008 National Player of the Year and getting a championship ring, I think it worked out pretty well for him. So congratulations to you again, Tyler. Thank you. We're proud of you.

Now, when we played, everybody went out of their way to pass me the ball, set screens for me, let me take a shot. Tyler chose not to block my shot—of course, I was so intimidated by him being near me that I missed it. [*Laughter*] There was one exception, though: Jack Wooten. He stole the ball from me; he blocked my shot; he fouled me once. Coach Williams had to remind him that there were a bunch of guys with guns around. [*Laughter*]

But just to show that there are no hard feelings, Jack, I want to congratulate you. He made Phi Beta Kappa this year, that's worth applauding. To achieve academic excellence as part of a national championship team is extraordinary. And I know that Jack is interested in public service, and we need more young people like him to be willing to serve our country. So, Jack, anytime you're ready. [*Laughter*] Come on board.

I know Coach Williams instills the importance of academics into all these guys, which is why they didn't just plow through the tournament field; they also had the highest graduation rate of anybody in the Final Four. And what they understood is that being a champion doesn't stop when you step off the court. In fact, they spend a remarkable amount of their time off the court in service to others.

They hold a Special Olympics clinic every year in which they scrimmage with Special Olympians and teach them basketball skills. Coach Williams has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for North Carolina charities. Every Christmas these guys compete with one another to see who can get the most creative Christmas gifts for underprivileged children who need a little bit of hope. All of this makes the Chapel Hill community stronger, it makes the State of North Carolina stronger, it makes our country stronger, and I know this team gets a lot of—a lot out of it as well.

So it's all a reflection on the great character of the program, but also the great character of the coach, just one of my favorite people and one of the most gracious individuals you'd ever care to meet. I want to congratulate you, Coach Williams. I want to congratulate all you guys for an outstanding season. And I got to say also, brother Lawson, you had an unbelievable series, so congratulations—playing a little gimpy and still just tearing it up. [*Laughter*] So we're very proud of you.

So thank you, everybody. Give these guys a big round of applause. And good luck next season.

Head Coach Roy Williams. I coached the national championship game in front of I think 79 thousand—I think—two hundred twenty-two people, and I was not nervous at all. And I'm scared to death right now. [*Laughter*] But on behalf of Chancellor Holden Thorp, our director of athletics, Dick Baddour, and the 2009 national championship North Carolina basketball team, we would like to present to you, Mr. President, your own jersey——

The President. That's what I'm talking about. Let's step out here—we don't want to block it from the cameras. All right, thank you so much. Thank you.

Mr. Williams. And our seniors will also present a plaque that shows that Mr. President——

The President. Commemorates.

Mr. Williams. ——did actually participate that morning.

The President. Participates—that's a nice way of putting it. [*Laughter*] Oh, look at that.

Mr. Williams. These are our five senior scholarship players that make this presentation to Mr. President.

The President. Well, thank you so much, guys. I appreciate that. Look at that. Barely broke a sweat. [*Laughter*] That's a beautiful

picture. Thank you so much, guys. Thank you. Now, if somebody could just present me a jump shot. [*Laughter*] I need one of those.

Thank you, Coach. Thank you, everybody. Have a wonderful rest of your visit here at the White House. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:12 p.m. on the South Portico at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. Kay R. Hagan; Andy Katz, senior writer, ESPN.com; and Mike Copeland, forward, Bobby Frasor, guard, Danny Green, forward/guard, Tyler Hansbrough, forward, Patrick Moody, forward, J.B. Tanner, guard, Jack Wooten, guard, and Ty Lawson, guard, University of North Carolina men's basketball team.

Statement on the Shootings at Camp Victory in Baghdad, Iraq
May 11, 2009

I was shocked and deeply saddened to hear the news from Camp Victory this morning, and my heart goes out to the families and friends of all the servicemembers involved in this horrible tragedy. I will press to ensure that we fully understand what led to this tragedy, and that we are doing everything we can to ensure that our men and women in uniform are protected as they serve our country so capably and courageously in harm's way. To begin this process, I met with Secretary Gates this afternoon to get a briefing on the situation.

Remarks Following a Discussion on Employer Health Care Costs
May 12, 2009

Hello, everybody. We just had a wonderful conversation that is a corollary to the discussion that I had yesterday, and you may be seeing a theme. This was—we're doing some stuff on health care because I think the country is geared up, businesses are geared up, families are geared up, to go ahead and start solving some of our extraordinary health care system problems.

Yesterday we focused a lot on cost. One element of cost is that where companies are able to take initiatives to make their employees healthier, to give them incentives and mechanisms to improve their wellness and to prevent disease, companies see their bottom lines improve. And so what we've done is to gather together a group, today, of some of the best practitioners of prevention and wellness programs in the private sector.

You have companies like Safeway that have been able to hold their costs flat for their employees at a time when other companies are seeing double-digit inflation in their health care. You've got terrific innovations at companies like Microsoft, where they actually have used home visits of doctors to reduce the utilization of emergency room care and are saving themselves millions of dollars.

We've got the hotel employees union that has been taking data and working individually with providers as well as their membership, working with the employer and the employee as well as the providers, and seeing huge reductions in some of the costs related to chronic illnesses.

Johnson & Johnson's has been a leader in this area since 1978. Pitney Bowes has been taking similar approaches and seeing millions of dollars in savings to their bottom line. The Ohio Department of Public Health has been doing terrific work with respect to their State employees as well as spreading the message across the State.

And then REI, which has to be fit since they're a fitness company, has been doing work that allows them to provide health care coverage—health insurance, not only to their full-time employees, but also their part-time employees. Every single employee is covered, but part of the reason they're able to do it is because they put a big emphasis on prevention and wellness.

So what you—what we've done here today is to gather together some of these stories and best practices to make sure that they are going to be informing the health care reform discussions that take place here in Washington. There's no quick fix; there's no silver bullet. When you hear what Safeway or Johnson & Johnson or any of these other companies have done, what you've seen is sustained experimentation over many years and a shift in incentive structures so that employees see concrete benefits as a consequence of them stopping smoking or losing weight or getting exercise, working with providers so that the provider incentives are aligned with the employee incentives as well, and changing the culture of the company.

Now, if we can do that in individual companies, there's no reason why we can't do that for a country as a whole. Part of what we want to do here, starting here today, is to lift up these best practices so other companies can identify and potentially implement them; but also to make sure that when we think about how we're going to reform the health care system as a whole, when we think about things like Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements, when we think about how we can make the system more efficient, that we're not just doing this in the abstract, but we're actually taking proven measures that have been applied in the private sector and seeing how we can apply those, for example, to Federal employees and our employee health care system. All this designed to save taxpayers money, save businesses money, and, ultimately, make the American people healthier and happier and make sure that we're getting a better bang for our health care dollar.

So it's been a terrific conversation. This will be a part of the ongoing process that we're developing over the next several months, and I appreciate all of you for participating in a wonderful conversation.

All right. Thank you, guys. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:23 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House.

Remarks at a Ceremony Honoring the National Association of Police Organizations TOP COPS

May 12, 2009

Well, thank you, Joe, for the wonderful introduction. Welcome, all of you, to the White House, and joining us on this beautiful spring day. It is an extraordinary privilege to celebrate these top cops, who have traveled here to be recognized for incredible acts of courage and quick thinking, which prevented harm and saved lives.

Before I speak more about these outstanding officers, there're just a few wonderful Members of Congress that I want to introduce. Representative John Conyers, one of the deans of the House of Representatives; Representative Emanuel Cleaver from Kansas City; and Representative Lucille Roybal-Allard, great to see you. Thank you so much. Please give them a big round of applause.

Now, I don't know if you guys are aware that we have a nickname for Joe Biden around here in the White House. Joe's been overseeing the way funds are being used under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to ensure tax dollars are going towards the intended purposes of creating jobs and aren't being wasted. So we've taken to calling him "the sheriff," because nobody messes with Joe.

And I want you to know that he is making sure that money is getting on the ground helping local communities, including making sure that money is going to allow local communities to hire more police officers and make sure that they've got the equipment and the training they need to succeed.

I also want to thank Attorney General Eric Holder for being here and for his leadership at the Department of Justice, which oversees much of the funding in the recovery plan and the budget that will be providing local law enforcement the resources they need.

And finally, I want to give a particular welcome to the leaders of the National Association of Police Organizations, including their outstanding president, Tom Nee. Thank you so much for being here.

This is an event that we are glad, as Joe mentioned, to bring back to the White House, after a period of absence, in honor of these fine officers and the folks across the country they represent: the men and women who walk the beat, who answer the call, and do the difficult work of keeping our neighborhoods safe. And it's no surprise that many police officers, including many of you, have served in our military or are still serving as members of the Reserve.

Of course, it's not a difficult thing for a President, or a Vice President, or anyone one of us to praise you. You deserve it. You've rescued hostages held at gunpoint. You've ended violent standoffs. You've taken on gunmen in the face of grave danger, refusing to give up or back down even after suffering serious injuries. You've reacted quickly in crisis to protect the innocent. You've reacted with compassion for those that were in need. And you've literally walked through the fire to help your neighbors escape disaster.

Now, that's what police officers do. You step into harm's way to form—officer by officer, block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood—the line between safety and violence, calm and chaos, hope and despair. And for that it's not difficult to offer our praise. But, you deserve more than just praise, for it's far more important that we actually support you; that we match these words, which come so easily, with the work that can and must follow.

Right now, for example, at this moment of economic challenge, one of the greatest concerns is that we'll see State and local governments forced to lay off police officers, even though we know that crime has a tendency to go up when the economy is in dire straits. We've seen that in my own hometown of Chicago and in many other cities.

So we can't back down, because the job of every American depends on the job you do and the resources that enable you to do that job well. Police officers know better than anyone: A neighborhood that isn't safe is a neighborhood that isn't growing, that won't see old businesses hiring new workers or new businesses opening their doors. You know how devastating crime can be, how it can shatter lives and undermine whole communities.

And that's why the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act includes $1 billion to save or create about 5,500 jobs through the COPS program. And there's another $2 billion in grants which will help keep police officers on the beat and on the job. In fact, in March, I went to Columbus, Ohio, to speak at their police academy's graduation ceremony, and these new officers are now protecting the streets of Columbus because of those grants. And there are similar stories being told in precincts all over America.

The budget we've passed builds on the recovery plan, providing additional funding for the COPS program as well as for Justice Assistance Grants, also known as the Byrne-JAG program. Taken together, we're making a significant downpayment towards my administration's goal of adding 50,000 police officers across this country. And that's only part of what we're doing to provide law enforcement with the tools and resources necessary to keep people safe.

As you know, this is a difficult moment for our Nation. But at a time when we face economic crisis born partially from irresponsibility on Wall Street and in Washington, I'm heartened by the folks who are standing behind me today who've demonstrated, with acts of selflessness and bravery, what it means to be responsible; what it means to be a problem-solver, a mediator, an investigator, and protector all wrapped into one; what it means to wave goodbye to your families and start another shift unsure of how it will end; and what it means to put your life on the line for a partner or a stranger in order—in other words, what it means to serve.

So I want to thank all of you for this extraordinary service. I am honored to welcome you to the White House. I'm proud to offer my congratulations, my appreciation, and most

importantly, my administration's unwavering support.

God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you, all, for joining us here today. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:38 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Vice President Joe Biden, who introduced the President. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Biden.

Letter to Health Care Stakeholders
May 12, 2009

Dear _____:

It was a pleasure to meet with all of you yesterday. As I said yesterday, health care reform will require all of us working together—from drug and insurance companies to labor unions and business executives, from doctors to hospitals and Members of Congress. I appreciate the commitment you have made to health care reform by pledging to do your part to reduce our Nation's annual health care spending growth rate by 1.5 percentage points. Coupled with comprehensive health care reform, your efforts could save the Nation more than $2 trillion over the next ten years and save hardworking families $2,500 in health care costs in the coming years.

Getting spiraling health care costs under control is essential to providing all Americans with affordable, quality care, making our businesses more competitive, and closing our budget deficits—so I will hold you to your pledge to get this done. As we discussed in our meeting yesterday, I would like you to update my Administration by early June on the progress you have made toward fulfilling this important commitment.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Stephen J. Ubl, president and chief executive officer, Advanced Medical Technology Association; J. James Rohack, president-elect, American Medical Association; Karen Ignagni, president and chief executive officer, America's Health Insurance Plans; Rich Umbdenstock, president and chief executive officer, American Hospital Association; Billy Tauzin, president and chief executive officer, Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America; and Dennis Rivera, chair, SEIU Healthcare, Service Employees International Union.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting a Supplemental Budget Request
May 12, 2009

Dear Madam Speaker:

Last month, I asked the Congress to consider changes to the level of borrowing authority for the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Today, I formally transmit this request in the accompanying supplemental budget request. I urge that the Congress expand the resources available to the IMF through its New Arrangements to Borrow (NAB) and approve a set of other proposals to strengthen the IMF, including an increase of about $8 billion in the U.S. quota subscription to the IMF.

The NAB is one mechanism that the IMF utilizes to boost its lending ability when its regular resources are at their limit in the face of circumstances that threaten the stability of the international monetary system. This increase in the NAB by the United States and other countries would provide the necessary resources for the IMF to address financial dangers in markets around the world, especially

those in developing countries impacted by the global financial crisis.

To that end, I request that the Congress approve both the U.S. expansion of NAB up to $100 billion and the increase in the U.S. quota subscription.

The size of the NAB is currently $50 billion. This change, and the U.S. quota increase, should carry a minimal budget score as it is equivalent in some respects to credit activity with very small risk. The request provides that the costs of these proposed NAB and quota increases will be reflected on a net present value basis.

This step is crucial for U.S. economic interests. Many of the developing countries that would benefit from the NAB expansion are experiencing severe economic decline and a massive withdrawal of capital. Should the situation become worse, and should the IMF not be in a position to stem the crisis, currencies could collapse. The experience with the Asian financial crisis shows that such a massive failure would be a catalyst for steeper drops in U.S. growth, jobs, and exports.

This proposal, first discussed at the international level at the recent G–20 meetings in London, came after broad consultation with Congress. The U.S. expansion of $100 billion in the NAB would be part of an overall international expansion of $500 billion. We committed to this expansion, and other countries are looking to the United States to deliver on our commitment.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 13.

Remarks at a White House Event Celebrating the Performing Arts
May 12, 2009

Thank you, everybody. Thank you so much. Please, everybody, be seated. It is a great pleasure to welcome all of you to the White House for an evening of music and poetry and spoken word from some of our Nation's most gifted performers, both distinguished veterans and up-and-coming young talents.

Now, we're here tonight not just to enjoy the works of these artists, but also to highlight the importance of the arts in our life and in our Nation, in our Nation's history. We're here to celebrate the power of words and music to help us appreciate beauty, but also to understand pain, to inspire us to action and to spur us on when we start to lose hope, to lift us up out of our daily existence, even if it's just for a few moments, and return us with hearts that are a little bit bigger and fuller than they were before.

The great jazz musician, Louis Armstrong, once said simply, "What we play is life." What we play is life, and that is what these artists do. They express the joys and hardships of life and remind us how much all of us have in common. It's a great gift and a great responsibility, and we're honored to host them here at the White House tonight.

I now have the privilege of introducing the star of the show, somebody who brings a lot of poetry to my own life, the First Lady, Michelle Obama.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:50 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 13.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Democratic Congressional Leadership
May 13, 2009

Thank you, Madam Speaker. Good morning, everybody. This is a gorgeous day and an encouraging day, because we just wrapped up, as the Speaker said, a extremely productive

meeting with the chairmen of the relevant committees, as well as the Majority Leader and Vice President Biden, to discuss one of the key pillars of a new foundation for our economy, and that is affordable, accessible, high-quality health care for all Americans.

I want to take a moment before I start talking about health care just to congratulate Chairman Waxman and the Energy and Commerce Committee Democrats, who've made such extraordinary progress in reaching a deal on comprehensive energy reform and climate legislation. This is a major step forward in building the kind of clean energy economy that will reduce America's dependence on foreign oil. And I once again call on Congress to send me legislation that places a market-based cap on carbon pollution, which will then drive incent for the kind of innovation and dynamic, new clean energy economy that can create jobs and new businesses all across America.

So this is an example of the extraordinary productivity that we're seeing over in the House right now. On health care, as Speaker Pelosi just mentioned, the House is working to pass a comprehensive health care reform bill by July 31st, before they head out for the August recess. And that's the kind of urgency and determination that we need to achieve what I believe will be historic legislation.

As I've said before, and as all Americans know, our health care system is broken. It's unsustainable for families, for businesses. It is unsustainable for the Federal Government and State governments.

We've had a lot of discussions in this town about deficits, and people across the political spectrum like to throw barbs back and forth about debt and deficits. The fact of the matter is, the most significant driver by far of our long-term debt and our long-term deficits is ever-escalating health care costs. And if we don't reform how health care is delivered in this country, then we are not going to be able to get a handle on that.

Now, in addition to the implications for the Federal budget, obviously, we're also thinking about the millions of American families out there who are struggling to pay premiums that have doubled over the last decade—rising four times the rate of their wages—and 46 million Americans who don't have any health insurance at all.

Businesses are using money to pay their rising health care costs that could be going to innovation and growth and new hiring. Far too many small businesses are dropping health care altogether. In fact, you've got small-business owners who can't afford health care for themselves, much less for their employees. And as we learned yesterday, pressures on Medicare are growing, which only underscores the need for reform.

That's why we've got to get this done. We've got to get it done this year. We've got to get it done this year, both in the House and in the Senate. And we don't have any excuses; the stars are aligned.

Now, the problems in our health care system didn't emerge overnight. We've debated about what to do about them for decades, but too often efforts at comprehensive reform have fallen apart due to special-interest lobbying and petty politics and the failure of all sides to come together. What's been so encouraging this week is you're starting to see a shift in these patterns.

On Monday, I met with representatives of the insurance and the drug companies, doctors and hospitals, and labor unions, groups that included some of the strongest critics of past comprehensive reform proposals. We discussed how they're pledging to do their part to reduce our Nation's health care spending by 1.5 percent per year. Coupled with comprehensive reform, this could result in our Nation saving over $2 trillion over the next 10 years, and that could save families $2,500 in the coming years, $2,500 per family.

Yesterday I met with CEOs from some of America's leading corporations who are finding innovative ways to cut their own health care costs by improving the health of their workers through prevention and wellness programs.

In the coming weeks and months, I believe that the House and Senate will be engaged in a difficult issue, and I'm committed to building a transparent process to get this moving. But whatever plans emerge, both from the House and the Senate, I do believe that they've got to uphold three basic principles: first, that the

rising costs of health care have to be brought down; second, that Americans have to be able to choose their own doctor and their own plan; and third, all Americans have to have quality, affordable health care.

These are the principles to which I'm committed. These are the principles to which the chairmen and the Speaker and the Majority Leader, my Vice President are committed. We're seeing now that traditional opponents of health care reform are embracing these ideas. They recognize that the time is now.

And so I am just deeply encouraged. And I want the message to go out all across America, we are not going to rest until we've delivered the kind of health care reform that's going to bring down costs for families, and improve quality, affordability, accessibility for all Americans.

So thank you very much, and enjoy this wonderful weather.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 a.m. on the South Drive at the White House.

Remarks Prior to Departure for Tempe, Arizona
May 13, 2009

Situation in Sri Lanka

Hello, everybody. Sorry to keep you guys waiting. Good to see you. I want to take a few moments at the top to talk about something that, with all the big issues going on, hasn't received much attention, but I think is worth talking about briefly.

As some of you know, we have a humanitarian crisis that's taking place in Sri Lanka, and I've been increasingly saddened by the desperate news in recent days. Tens of thousands of innocent civilians are trapped between the warring Government forces and the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka with no means of escape, little access to food, water, shelter, and medicine. This has led to widespread suffering and the loss of hundreds if not thousands of lives.

Without urgent action, this humanitarian crisis could turn into a catastrophe. Now is the time, I believe, to put aside some of the political issues that are involved and to put the lives of the men and women and children who are innocently caught in the crossfire—to put them first.

So I urge the Tamil Tigers to lay down their arms and let civilians go. Their forced recruitment of civilians and their use of civilians as human shields is deplorable. These tactics will only serve to alienate all those who carry them out.

I'm also calling on the Sri Lankan Government to take several steps to alleviate this humanitarian crisis. First, the Government should stop the indiscriminate shelling that has taken hundreds of innocent lives, including several hospitals. The Government should live up to its commitment to not use heavy weapons in the conflict zone.

Second, the Government should give United Nations humanitarian teams access to the civilians who are trapped between the warring parties so that they can receive the immediate assistance necessary to save lives.

Third, the Government should also allow the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross access to nearly 190,000 displaced people within Sri Lanka so that they can receive additional support that they need.

The United States stands ready to work with the international community to support the people of Sri Lanka in this time of suffering. I don't believe that we can delay. Now is the time for all of us to work together to avert further humanitarian suffering.

Going forward, Sri Lanka must seek a peace that is secure and lasting and grounded in respect for all of its citizens. More civilian casualties and inadequate care for those caught in resettlement camps will only make it more difficult to achieve the peace that the people of Sri Lanka deserve.

Release of Detainee Interrogation Photos

Now, let me also say a few words about an issue that I know you asked Robert Gibbs

about quite a bit today, and that's my decision to argue against the release of additional detainee photos. Understand, these photos are associated with closed investigations of the alleged abuse of detainees in our ongoing war effort.

And I want to emphasize that these photos that were requested in this case are not particularly sensational, especially when compared to the painful images that we remember from Abu Ghraib, but they do represent conduct that did not conform with the Army Manual. That's precisely why they were investigated—and, I might add, investigated long before I took office—and, where appropriate, sanctions have been applied.

In other words, this is not a situation in which the Pentagon has concealed or sought to justify inappropriate action. Rather, it has gone through the appropriate and regular processes. And the individuals who were involved have been identified, and appropriate actions have been taken.

It's therefore my belief that the publication of these photos would not add any additional benefit to our understanding of what was carried out in the past by a small number of individuals. In fact, the most direct consequence of releasing them, I believe, would be to further inflame anti-American opinion and to put our troops in greater danger.

Moreover, I fear the publication of these photos may only have a chilling effect on future investigations of detainee abuse. And obviously, the thing that is most important in my mind is making sure that we are abiding by the Army Manual, and that we are swiftly investigating any instances in which individuals have not acted appropriately, and that they are appropriately sanctioned. That's my aim, and I do not believe that the release of these photos at this time would further that goal.

Now, let me be clear: I am concerned about how the release of these photos would be—would impact on the safety of our troops. I have made it very clear to all who are within the chain of command, however, of the United States Armed Forces that the abuse of detainees in our custody is prohibited and will not be tolerated. I have repeated that since I've been in office. Secretary Gates understands that; Admiral Mullen understands that; and that has been communicated across the chain of command.

Any abuse of detainees is unacceptable. It is against our values. It endangers our security. It will not be tolerated.

All right. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:12 p.m. on the South Drive at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to White House Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs.

Commencement Address at Arizona State University in Tempe
May 13, 2009

Well, thank you. Thank you, President Crow, for that extremely generous introduction, for your inspired leadership as well here at ASU. And I want to thank the entire ASU community for the honor of attaching my name to a scholarship program that will help open the doors of higher education to students from every background. What a wonderful gift. Thank you. That notion of opening doors of opportunity to everybody, that is the core mission of this school; it's the core mission of my Presidency. And I hope this program will serve as a model for universities across this country. So thank you so much.

I want to, obviously, congratulate the class of 2009 for your unbelievable achievement. I want to thank the parents, the uncles, the grandpas, the grandmas, cousins—calabash cousins—everybody who was involved in helping these extraordinary young people arrive at this moment. I also want to apologize to the entire State of Arizona for stealing away your wonderful former Governor, Janet Napolitano. But you've got a fine Governor here, and I also know that Janet is now applying her extraordinary talents to serve our entire country as the Secretary of Homeland Security, keeping America safe. And she's doing a great job.

Now, before I begin, I'd just like to clear the air about that little controversy everybody was talking about a few weeks back. I have to tell you, I really thought this was much ado about nothing, but I do think we all learned an important lesson. I learned never again to pick another team over the Sun Devils in my NCAA brackets. [*Laughter*] It won't happen again. President Crow and the board of regents will soon learn all about being audited by the IRS. [*Laughter*]

Now, in all seriousness, I come here not to dispute the suggestion that I haven't yet achieved enough in my life. [*Laughter*] First of all, Michelle concurs with that assessment. [*Laughter*] She has a long list of things that I have not yet done waiting for me when I get home. But more than that, I come to embrace the notion that I haven't done enough in my life; I heartily concur. I come to affirm that one's title, even a title like President of the United States, says very little about how well one's life has been led; that no matter how much you've done or how successful you've been, there's always more to do, always more to learn, and always more to achieve.

And I want to say to you today, graduates, class of 2009, that despite having achieved a remarkable milestone in your life, despite the fact that you and your families are so rightfully proud, you too cannot rest on your laurels. Not even some of those remarkable young people who were introduced earlier, not even that young lady who's got four degrees—getting today. You can't rest. Your own body of work is also yet to come.

Now, some graduating classes have marched into this stadium in easy times, times of peace and stability, when we call on our graduates simply to keep things going and don't screw it up. [*Laughter*] Other classes have received their diplomas in times of trial and upheaval, when the very foundations of our lives, the old order, has been shaken, the old ideas and institutions have crumbled, and a new generation is called upon to remake the world.

It should be clear to you by now the category into which all of you fall, for we gather here tonight in times of extraordinary difficulty for the Nation and for the world. The economy remains in the midst of a historic recession, the worst we've seen since the Great Depression; the result, in part, of greed and irresponsibility that rippled out from Wall Street and Washington, as we spent beyond our means and failed to make hard choices. We're engaged in two wars and a struggle against terrorism. The threats of climate change, nuclear proliferation, and pandemic defy national boundaries and easy solutions.

For many of you, these challenges are also felt in more personal terms. Perhaps you're still looking for a job or struggling to figure out what career path makes sense in this disrupted economy. Maybe you've got student loans—no, you definitely have student loans—or credit card debts, and you're wondering how you'll ever pay them off. Maybe you've got a family to raise, and you're wondering how you'll ensure that your children have the same opportunities you've had to get an education and pursue their dreams.

Now, in the face of these challenges, it may be tempting to fall back on the formulas for success that have been pedaled so frequently in recent years. It goes something like this: You're taught to chase after all the usual brass rings; you try to be on this who's who list or that top 100 list; you chase after the big money and you figure out how big your corner office is; you worry about whether you have a fancy enough title or a fancy enough car. That's the message that's sent each and every day, or has been in our culture for far too long, that through material possessions, through a ruthless competition pursued only on your own behalf, that's how you will measure success.

Now, you can take that road, and it may work for some. But at this critical juncture in our Nation's history, at this difficult time, let me suggest that such an approach won't get you where you want to go. It displays a poverty of ambition, that—in fact, the elevation of appearance over substance, of celebrity over character, of short-term gains over lasting achievement is precisely what your generation needs to help end.

Now, ASU, I want to highlight two main problems with that old, tired, me-first

approach to life. First of all, it distracts you from what's truly important, and it may lead you to compromise your values and your principles and commitments. Think about it. It's in chasing titles and status, in worrying about the next election rather than the national interest and the interests of those who you're supposed to represent that politicians so often lose their ways in Washington. They spend time thinking about polls but not about principle. It was in pursuit of gaudy, short-term profits and the bonuses that came with them that so many folks lost their way on Wall Street, engaging in extraordinary risks with other people's money.

In contrast, the leaders we revere, the businesses and institutions that last, they are not generally the result of a narrow pursuit of popularity or personal advancement, but of devotion to some bigger purpose: the preservation of the Union or the determination to lift a country out of a depression; the creation of a quality product; a commitment to your customers, your workers, your shareholders, and your community; a commitment to make sure that an institution like ASU is inclusive and diverse and giving opportunity to all. That's the hallmark of real success.

That other stuff, the trappings of success may be a byproduct of this larger mission, but it can't be the central thing—just ask Bernie Madoff. That's the first problem with the old attitude.

The second problem with the old approach to success is that a relentless focus on the outward markers of success can lead to complacency. It can make you lazy. We too often let the external, the material things, serve as indicators that we're doing well, even though something inside us tells us that we're not doing our best; that we're avoiding that which is hard but also necessary; that we're shrinking from, rather than rising to the challenges of the age. And the thing is, in this new, hyper-competitive age, none of us—none of us can afford to be complacent.

That's true whatever profession you choose. Professors might earn the distinction of tenure, but that doesn't guarantee that they'll keep putting in the long hours and late nights and have the passion and the drive to be great educators. The same principle is true in your personal life. Being a parent is not just a matter of paying the bills, doing the bare minimum; it's not just bringing a child into the world that matters, but the acts of love and sacrifice it takes to raise and educate that child and give them opportunity. It can happen to Presidents as well. If you think about it, Abraham Lincoln and Millard Fillmore had the very same title, they were both Presidents of the United States, but their tenure in office and their legacy could not be more different.

And this is not just true for individuals; it's also true for this Nation. In recent years, in many ways, we've become enamored with our own past success, lulled into complacency by the glitter of our own achievements. We've become accustomed to the title of "military superpower," forgetting the qualities that got us there, not just the power of our weapons, but the discipline and valor and the code of conduct of our men and women in uniform. The Marshall plan and the Peace Corps and all those initiatives that show our commitment to working with other nations to pursue the ideals of opportunity and equality and freedom that have made us who we are, that's what made us a superpower.

We've become accustomed to our economic dominance in the world, forgetting that it wasn't reckless deals and get-rich-quick schemes that got us where we are, but hard work and smart ideas, quality products and wise investments. We started taking shortcuts. We started living on credit instead of building up savings. We saw businesses focus more on rebranding and repackaging than innovating and developing new ideas that improve our lives.

All the while, the rest of the world has grown hungrier, more restless, in constant motion to build and to discover, not content with where they are right now, determined to strive for more. They're coming.

So graduates, it's now abundantly clear that we need to start doing things a little bit different. In your own lives, you'll need to continuously adapt to a continuously changing economy. You'll end up having more than one job and more than one career over the course of your life. You'll have to keep on gaining new skills, possibly even new degrees. And you'll have to

keep on taking risks as new opportunities arise.

And as a nation, we'll need a fundamental change of perspective and attitude. It's clear that we need to build a new foundation, a stronger foundation, for our economy and our prosperity, rethinking how we grow our economy, how we use energy, how we educate our children, how we care for our sick, how we treat our environment.

Many of our current challenges are unprecedented. There are no standard remedies, no go-to fixes this time around. And class of 2009, that's why we're going to need your help. We need young people like you to step up. We need your daring; we need your enthusiasm; we need your energy; we need your imagination.

And let me be clear, when I say "young," I'm not just referring to the date of your birth certificate. I'm talking about an approach to life, a quality of mind and quality of heart; a willingness to follow your passions, regardless of whether they lead to fortune and fame; a willingness to question conventional wisdom and rethink old dogmas; a lack of regard for all the traditional markers of status and prestige, and a commitment instead to doing what's meaningful to you, what helps others, what makes a difference in this world.

That's the spirit that led a band of patriots not much older than most of you to take on an empire, to start this experiment in democracy we call America. It's what drove young pioneers West to Arizona and beyond. It's what drove young women to reach for the ballot, what inspired a 30-year-old escaped slave to run an underground railroad to freedom, what inspired a young man named Cesar to go out and help farm workers, what inspired a 26-year-old preacher to lead a bus boycott for justice. It's what led firefighters and police officers in the prime of their lives up the stairs of those burning towers and young people across this country to drop what they were doing and come to the aid of a flooded New Orleans. It's what led two guys in a garage—named Hewlett and Packard—to form a company that would change the way we live and work, what led scientists in laboratories and novelists in coffee shops to labor in obscurity until they finally succeeded in changing the way we see the world.

That's the great American story: Young people just like you, following their passions, determined to meet the times on their own terms. They weren't doing it for the money. Their titles weren't fancy: ex-slave, minister, student, citizen. A whole bunch of them didn't get honorary degrees. But they changed the course of history, and so can you ASU, so can you class of 2009. So can you.

With a degree from this outstanding institution, you have everything you need to get started. You've got no excuses. You have no excuses not to change the world. Did you study business? Go start a company. Or why not help a struggling non-for-profit find better, more effective ways to serve folks in need. You study nursing? Understaffed clinics and hospitals across this country are desperate for your help. You study education? Teach in a high-need school where the kids really need you; give a chance to kids who can't get everything they need, maybe in their neighborhood, maybe not even in their home. But we can't afford to give up on—prepare them to compete for any job anywhere in the world. You study engineering? Help us lead a green revolution, developing new sources of clean energy that will power our economy and preserve our planet.

But you can also make your mark in smaller, more individual ways. That's what so many of you have already done during your time here at ASU, tutoring children, registering voters, doing your own small part to fight hunger and homelessness, AIDS and cancer. One student said it best when she spoke about her senior engineering project building medical devices for people with disabilities in a village in Africa. Her professor showed a video of the folks they'd been helping, and she said: "When we saw the people on the videos, we began to feel a connection to them. It made us want to be successful for them." Think about that: "It made us want to be successful for them."

That's a great motto for all of us: Find somebody to be successful for; raise their hopes; rise to their needs. As you think about life after graduation, as you look into the

mirror tonight after the partying is done—[*applause*]—that shouldn't get such a big cheer—[*laughter*]—you may look in the mirror tonight, and you may see somebody who's not really sure what to do with their lives. That's what you may see, but a troubled child might look at you and see a mentor, a homebound senior citizen might see a lifeline, the folks at your local homeless shelter might see a friend. None of them care how much money is in your bank account or whether you're important at work or whether you're famous around town; they just know that you're somebody who cares, somebody who makes a difference in their lives.

So class of 2009, that's what building a body of work is all about. It's about the daily labor, the many individual acts, the choices large and small that add up over time, over a lifetime, to a lasting legacy. That's what you want on your tombstone. It's about not being satisfied with the latest achievement, the latest gold star, because the one thing I know about a body of work is that it's never finished. It's cumulative; it deepens and expands with each day that you give your best, each day that you give back and contribute to the life of your community and your nation. You may have setbacks, and you may have failures, but you're not done; you're not even getting started, not by a long shot.

And if you ever forget that, just look to history. Thomas Paine was a failed corset maker, a failed teacher, and a failed tax collector before he made his mark on history with a little book called "Common Sense" that helped ignite a revolution. Julia Child didn't publish her first cookbook until she was almost 50. Colonel Sanders didn't open up his first Kentucky Fried Chicken till he was in his sixties. Winston Churchill was dismissed as little more than a has-been who enjoyed scotch a little bit too much, before he took over as Prime Minister and saw Great Britain through its finest hour. No one thought a former football player stocking shelves at the local supermarket would return to the game he loved, become a Super Bowl MVP, and then come here to Arizona and lead your Cardinals to their first Super Bowl. Your body of work is never done.

Each of them, at one point in their life, didn't have any title or much status to speak of. But they had passion, a commitment to following that passion wherever it would lead and to working hard every step along the way. And that's not just how you'll ensure that your own life is well-lived; it's how you'll make a difference in the life of our Nation.

I talked earlier about the selfishness and irresponsibility on Wall Street and Washington that rippled out and led to so many of the problems that we face today. I talked about the focus on outward markers of success that can help lead us astray. But here's the thing, class of 2009: It works the other way around too.

Acts of sacrifice and decency without regard to what's in it for you, that also creates ripple effects, ones that lift up families and communities; that spread opportunity and boost our economy; that reach folks in the forgotten corners of the world who, in committed young people like you, see the true face of America: our strength, our goodness, our diversity, our enduring power, our ideals.

I know starting your careers in troubled times is a challenge, but it is also a privilege. Because it's moments like these that force us to try harder and dig deeper and to discover gifts we never knew we had, to find the greatness that lies within each of us. So don't ever shy away from that endeavor. Don't stop adding to your body of work. I can promise that you will be the better for that continued effort, as will this Nation that we all love.

Congratulations, class of 2009, on your graduation. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:59 p.m. in Sun Devil Stadium. In his remarks, he referred to Michael M. Crow, president, Arizona State University; Gov. Janice K. Brewer of Arizona; former stock broker Bernard Madoff, who was convicted of 11 felonies, including securities fraud and money laundering, on March 12; and Kurt Warner, quarterback, Arizona Cardinals. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 14.

Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session in Rio Rancho, New Mexico
May 14, 2009

The President. Thank you so much. What a wonderful welcome. It's good to be back in New Mexico. It's always nice to get out of Washington for a while and come to places like Rio Rancho. The climate is nice, the conversation is nice, people are nice. It is just wonderful to be here.

We've got a few special guests that I want to acknowledge here. First of all, a great friend, one of the finest Governors in the country, please give it up for Bill Richardson, Lieutenant Governor Diane Denish, Secretary of State Mary Herrera, State Treasurer James Lewis, State Auditor Hector Balderas.

We've also got Joe Garcia, president of the National Congress of American Indians; got Rio Rancho mayor, Tom Swisstack. We've got some Members of Congress who couldn't be here today, but I just want to acknowledge them because they're doing a great job: Senator Tom Udall, Senator Jeff Bingaman, and Representative Ben Lujan. And I want to thank Chris for the wonderful introduction and for her wonderful family who are here. Please give her a big round of applause.

Now, the last time I came here was 10 days before the election. We were over at the University of New Mexico. Tens of thousands of you showed up; it was a gorgeous night, stars were out. And I told you then that if we wanted to steer ourselves out of our economic crisis, if we wanted to bring about the change we needed, then I needed your help; I needed you to show up one more time. And, New Mexico, you delivered.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. I love you back. You delivered because you believed that after an era of selfishness and greed, we could reclaim a sense of responsibility from Wall Street to Washington to Main Street. You believed that in a time of great inequality, we could restore a sense of fairness to our economy. You believed that rather than go back to the pursuit of short-term profits and a bubble-and-bust economy that led us to this point, we could build an economy based on sound ideas and solid investments, hard work, in order to secure a long-term prosperity.

So, New Mexico, I've come back today to tell you that's exactly what we've begun to do. Since the very first day that I took office, we have acted boldly and swiftly across all fronts to clear away the wreckage of this painful recession and to start laying a new foundation for prosperity.

We passed the most ambitious economic recovery plan in our Nation's history to jumpstart job creation and get our economy moving again, a plan that has kept teachers in the classroom and class sizes from increasing, a plan that will save or create 22,000 jobs just in New Mexico, mostly in the private sector, a plan that made good on the middle class tax cut that we promised, a tax cut that's already begun to appear in paychecks for 700,000 working families across New Mexico.

We made historic investments in the kind of clean energy that's led to an influx of cutting-edge companies creating new jobs and new opportunities right here in this State. We've made productive strides towards fixing the health care crisis that I know has hit especially hard here, strides towards reform that brings down costs; that give Americans the freedom to keep their doctor or plan that they already have, and choose a new doctor and a new plan if they want to; that finally gives every American access to quality, affordable health care.

And already we've got millions of children across the country that have health care right now under the children's health care bill that we signed since I've taken office. So I believe we're moving in the right direction. Step by step, we're making progress. Now, we've got a long way to go before we can put this recession behind us, and New Mexico is doing better than many States. But it's tough out there. But we do know that the gears of our economy, the economic engine, are slowly beginning to turn.

In the meantime, though, I know that there are so many Americans who are hurting right

now. You got hundreds of thousands who've lost their jobs just last month. Millions are working jobs that don't pay enough to cover the bills. Millions more see increasing portions of their income going towards paying down debt. There are Americans struggling to cope with the rising cost of putting things like their mortgage, their tuition, their medical bills, even their food and gas bills, on their credit cards, because they feel like they're going underwater. But they're quickly finding out that they can't dig their way out of debt because of unfair practices. And that's what I want to talk about today briefly.

We're talking about folks like Chris Lardner who—she and her husband work hard; they're doing well. They have a wonderful small business. But she wrote to me last week, and you just heard her story. Her husband's business is in Albuquerque; two of their children are in college. When one tuition payment that was mistakenly charged to a credit card put her over the limit, her credit card company more than tripled her rate to nearly 30 percent. And she made a simple point in the letter that she wrote to me. She said: "If we conducted business this way, we'd have no business," she wrote. "And if this is happening to us, I can only imagine what's going on in homes less fortunate than ours."

Now, you all know what Chris is talking about. I know. I remember. It hasn't been that long since I had my credit card, sometimes working that a little bit. [*Laughter*] We're lured in by ads and mailings that hook us with the promise of low rates while keeping the right to raise those rates at any time for any reason, even on old purchases, even when you make a late payment on a different card. Right now, credit card companies charge more than $15 billion a year in penalty fees. One in five Americans carry a balance that has been charged interest rates above 20 percent. Sometimes they even raise rates on outstanding balances even when you've paid your bills on time.

Now, I understand that many Americans are defaulting on their debt, and that's why these companies claim the need to raise rates. One of the causes of this economic crisis was that too many people were living beyond their means with mortgages they couldn't afford, buying things they couldn't pay for, maxing out on credit cards that they couldn't pay down. And in the last decade, Americans' credit card debt has increased by 25 percent. Nearly half of all Americans carry a balance on their credit cards, and those who do have an average balance over $7,000.

So we have been complicit in these problems. We've contributed to our own problems. We've got to change how we operate. But these practices, they've only grown worse in the midst of this recession, when hard-working Americans can afford them least. Now fees silently appear, payment deadlines suddenly move, millions of cardholders have seen their interest rates jump in the past 6 months.

Now, you should not have to worry that when you sign up for a credit card, you're signing away all your rights. You shouldn't need a magnifying glass or a law degree to read the fine print that sometimes don't even appear to be written in English or Spanish. And frankly, when you're trying to navigate your way through this economy, you shouldn't feel like you're getting ripped off by "any time, any reason" rate hikes and payment deadlines that seem to move around every month. That happen to anybody? You think you're supposed to pay it this day, and suddenly—and it's never on the end of the month where you're paying all the rest of your bills, right? It's like on the 19th—[*laughter*]—all kinds of harsh penalties and fees that you never knew about.

Enough is enough. It's time for strong, reliable protections for our consumers. It's time for reform that's built on transparency and accountability and mutual responsibility, values fundamental to the new foundation we seek to build for our economy.

Now, this is not an issue I just discovered recently. For years, I've been a proponent of strengthening consumer protections when it came to credit cards. As a Senator, I fought predatory lending and credit card abuse, and I called for what I called "a credit card bill of rights." Last month, I met with the leaders of the major credit card companies to discuss these and other reforms that I believe will better protect the nearly 80 percent of American households that use credit cards.

And we didn't agree on anything—everything, as you might expect. [*Laughter*] I—that was a slip of the tongue here. [*Laughter*] We didn't agree on everything, but we did agree that any reforms we can shouldn't diminish consumers' access to credit. I also think there's no doubt that people need to accept, as I said before, responsibility that comes with holding a credit card. This is not free money; it's debt. And you shouldn't take on more than you can handle. We expect consumers to make sound choices and live within their means and pay what they owe in a timely manner.

Banks are a business too, and so they have a right to insist that timely payments are made. But what we also expect is that our institutions act with the same sense of responsibility that the American people aspire to in their own lives. We expect that when we enter into an agreement, that agreement is reasonable and transparent. We expect to pay what's fair, not just what fattens growing profits for some credit card company. This is America, and we don't begrudge a company's success when that success is based on honest dealings with consumers. But some of these dealings are not honest. That's why we need reform.

We need reform that restores some sense of balance. We need a new equilibrium where credit is flowing, where lenders can succeed, where consumers don't find themselves in a bad situation that they didn't anticipate. This kind of reform is especially needed during this economic crisis. And as I've said all along, it should adhere to four basic principles:

First, there has to be strong, reliable protections for consumers, protections that ban unfair rate increases and forbid abusive fees and penalties. The days of "any time, any reason, anything goes" rate hikes and late fees, that must end. That must end.

Second, all forms and statements that credit card companies send out have to be in plain language, in plain sight. No more fine print, no more confusing terms, no more hiding the truth. We're going to require clarity and transparency from now on.

Third, we have to give people the tools to shop for a credit card that meets their needs without being fear—being afraid of being taken advantage of. So we're going to require firms to make all their contract terms easily accessible, and we're going to give consumers the information they need to do some comparison shopping. And we'll require firms to offer at least one simple, straightforward card that offers the strongest protections along with the plainest terms and prices.

And finally, we need more accountability. Instead of abuse that goes unpunished, we need to strengthen monitoring and enforcement and penalties for those who engage in deceptive practices that take advantage of families and consumers. And we also need to clean up practices at universities to protect students from getting stuck in debt before they even get started in life. That's important.

Now, the Federal Reserve has already issued some new rules that would change some of these practices, and I'm grateful to them for doing so. But I'm also pleased that Congress has begun to act. Two weeks ago, the House passed credit card reform legislation that follows these principles by a wide bipartisan majority, and I thank them for that.

And New Mexico, you should be proud that you've elected people—as I said before, Ben Ray Lujan, Martin Heinrich, Harry Teague—who stood up for you by voting for that bill. Even as we speak, the Senate is debating its version of the bill, and I know your Senators, Jeff Bingaman and Tom Udall, stand on your side too.

So I'm calling on Congress to take final action to pass a credit card reform bill that protects American consumers and send it to my desk so that I can sign it into law by Memorial Day. There's no time for delay. It's time to get it done. There's no time for delay. We need durable and successful flows of credit in our economy, but we can't tolerate profits that depend on misleading working families. Those days are over.

Because more than anything, this economic crisis has reminded us we're all in this together. We can't prosper by putting off hard choices or by protecting the profits of the few at the expense of the middle class. We're making steady progress moving from recession to recovery, but we want lasting prosperity. And

that means that we have to ensure that the legacy of this moment is an American economy that rewards work and innovation, that's guided by fairness and responsibility, and that grows steadily into the future.

So, New Mexico, I know there will be setbacks. I know that this is going to take some time. Some of you are going to continue to struggle for awhile. We're doing everything we can. But here's what I also know, if you're willing to do your part, if our companies are willing to do their part, if those of us in Washington are willing to do our part, if we all work together, then I promise you this: Years from now, you will be able to look back at this moment as the time when the American people once again came together to reclaim their future and bring about a new and brighter day.

Thank you, everybody. Thank you.

So I didn't come here—I didn't come here just to make a speech. Whenever we visit a community we want to do a little bit of a town hall, give people a chance to ask questions. Obviously, we've got a lot of people, and I won't get through every question, but I'm going to try to get through as many as possible.

And we're going to go boy, girl, boy, girl—[*laughter*]—or girl, boy, girl, boy. And I'm going to go around the room. If you can raise your hands when you have the question, and there are people with microphones in the audience, so wait until you get the microphone. Everybody can hear your question that way, and introduce yourself so we know who you are.

And I'll start with this young lady over here. Yes.

Health Care Reform

Q. Oh, thank you. Thank you, Mr. President. My name is Linda Allison. I work for one of the large corporations here. But I talk to a lot of people about health care. My question is, so many people go bankrupt using their credit cards to pay for health care. Why have they taken single-payer off the plate? And why is Senator Baucus on the Finance Committee discussing health care when he has received so much money from the pharmaceutical companies? Isn't it a conflict of interest?

The President. Well, as you know, I campaigned vigorously on health care reform, and I think that we have a better chance of getting it done this year than we've had in decades. I am optimistic about us getting health care reform done.

Now, health care is one-sixth of our economy, so it is a complicated, difficult task. And Congress is going to have to work hard. And everybody is going to have to come at this with a practical perspective, as opposed to trying to be ideologically pure in getting it done.

Here are my principles in terms of health care: Number one, we've got to control costs across the system, because if we simply insured everybody under the current system, we couldn't afford it; we'd go broke. The fact of the matter is, is that families are seeing their premiums go up, skyrocket each and every year. Businesses are getting crushed by the rising costs of their employees' health care. And the Federal Government—Medicare and Medicaid—is going broke. That's the single biggest driver, by the way, of our deficits.

I want everybody to be clear about this, because driving in I saw some folks who were saying, what are you going to do about debt, et cetera. Listen, by far the biggest contributor to our national debt and our annual deficit is the costs of Medicare and Medicaid, as well as the other entitlement—Social Security, defense, and interest on the national debt. That's the lion's share of the Federal budget. The things you read about in the newspapers and you see on TV about earmarks, I want to get rid of earmarks, but the truth of the matter, they're only 1 percent of the entire budget. Most of what's driving us into debt is health care. And so we've got to drive down costs.

Now, here is some good news. There are ways that we can drive down costs, because we just have an inefficient system. If we emphasize prevention and wellness programs, if we help—so that we're reimbursing doctors and providers not just for treating people after they get sick but for helping people stay well, if we use medical technology to reduce error rates and ensure electronic medical billing so when you go into the hospital, you don't have 15, 20 forms that you have to fill out over and over and

over again—there are simple things that we can do that will save us money, so we need to focus on cost. That's number one.

Number two, I think that it is very important that we provide coverage for all people, because if everybody's got coverage then they're not going to the emergency room for treatment. And right now, if you've got health insurance, the average family is paying about $900 a year in additional hidden costs because you're subsidizing the folks who are going to the emergency room.

And so you'd be better off with a system that might cost the Federal Government overall a little bit more—and we do have to pay for that—but that would lower your premiums so that you don't have these hidden costs, because it's cheaper to treat a child for asthma with an inhaler than it is to have them go to the emergency room and take up a hospital bed. So that's the second principle.

Now, this brings to the last principle, and so this touches on your point, and that is, why not do a single-payer system. Got the little single-payer advocates up here. All right, for those of you who are—don't know, a single-payer system is like—Medicare is sort of a single-payer system, but it's only for people over 65. And the way it works is—the idea is, is that you don't have insurance companies as middlemen. The Government goes directly and pays doctors or nurses.

If I were starting a system from scratch, then I think that the idea of moving towards a single-payer system could very well make sense. That's the kind of system that you have in most industrialized countries around the world. The only problem is that we're not starting from scratch. We have, historically, a tradition of employer-based health care. And although there are a lot of people who are not satisfied with their health care, the truth is, is that the vast majority of people currently get health care from their employers, and you've got this system that's already in place. We don't want a huge disruption as we go into health care reform where suddenly we're trying to completely reinvent one-sixth of the economy.

So what I've said is, let's set up a system where if you already have health care through your employer, and you're happy with it, you don't have to change doctors; you don't have to change plans; nothing changes. If you don't have health care or you're highly unsatisfied with your health care, then let's give you choices, let's give you an options, including a public plan that you could enroll in and sign up for. That's been my proposal.

Now, obviously, as President I've got to work with Congress to get this done and—[*laughter*]. There are folks in Congress who are doing terrific work; they're working hard. They've been having a series of hearings. I'm confident that both the House and the Senate are going to produce a bill before the August recess. And it may not have everything I want in there or everything you want in there, but it will be a vast improvement over what we currently have.

We'll then have to reconcile the two bills, but I'm confident that we are going to get health care reform this year and start putting us on a path that's sustainable over the long term. That's a commitment I made during the campaign; I intend to keep it.

All right. We've got—it's a man's turn. This guy right here. This guy right here—big guy. Yes, right here.

Unions/Legislative Agenda

Q. Hello, President Obama–is it on? Hello, President Obama. My name is Isidoro and I work with AFT New Mexico and also with the AFL–CIO. And I'd like to ask you, what would the employee free choice act do for New Mexicans and throughout the United States? And mine is kind of like a two-question, and the second one is, how can you help us get this bill passed?

The President. Okay, the—let me talk about the employee free choice act. One of the things that I believe in—and if you look at our history, I think it bears this out—even if you're not a member of a union, you owe something to unions, because a lot of the things that you take for granted as an employee of a company—the idea of overtime and minimum wage and benefits—a whole host of things that you,

even if you're not a member of a union, now take for granted, that happened because unions fought and helped to make employers more accountable.

The problem that we've seen is that union membership has declined significantly over the last 30 years. And so the question is, why is that? Now, part of it, the economy has changed and the culture has changed, and there hasn't been a very friendly politics in Washington when it comes to union membership. But part of it just has to do with the fact that the scales have been tilted to make it really hard to form a union. So a lot of companies, because they want maximum flexibility, they would rather spend a lot of money on consultants and lawyers to prevent a union from forming than they would just going ahead and having the union and then trying to work with—and collectively—allow workers to collectively bargain.

So there's a bill called the employee free choice act that would try to even out the playing field. And what it would essentially say is, is that if a majority of workers at a company want a union, then they can get a union without delay and some of the monkey business that's done right now to prevent them from having a union. Now, I want to give the other side of the argument. Businesses object to some of the provisions in the employee free choice act, because one of the things that's in there is something called card check, where rather than have a secret ballot which—and organize a big election, you could simply have enough employees, a majority of employees, check a card, and that would then form the union. And the employers argue we need to have a secret ballot.

I think that there may be areas of compromise to get this bill done. I'm supportive of it, but there aren't enough votes right now in the Senate to get it passed. And what I think we have to do is to find ways in which the core idea of the employee free choice act is preserved, which is, how do we make it easier for people who want to form a union to at least get a vote and have a even playing field; how do we do that but, at the same time, get enough votes to pass the bill? That's what we're working on right now. I think it's going to have a chance of passage, but there's still more work to be done. Okay?

All right, it's a young lady's turn. This young lady right there. You, yes. [*Laughter*]

Economic Stabilization

Q. Hello, President Obama. Our family, we're small-business owners, and we're seeing a marked decrease in revenue due to customers having less discretionary income. Are there any plans to help small businesses ride out the storm?

The President. I'm sorry, the—can you repeat—I missed just part of it. No, not the whole thing. You're a small-business owner. You were saying that you've seen something happen to your revenues, but I couldn't hear you.

Q. We've noticed a decrease in——

The President. A decrease——

Q. Right.

The President. Well, look, this is part of why we passed the Recovery Act. We passed a package of $787 billion over 2 years. This is the largest economic recovery package ever been passed, and it includes tax cuts. So everybody should be seeing a slight increase in your paycheck. It's not in a lump sum; it's spread out. Each paycheck you're getting a little bit money back that you weren't getting before, so that's putting money in people's pockets.

We are rebuilding our infrastructure all across the country. So, Governor Richardson, I know he's put in a whole bunch of proposals to rebuild roads and bridges and infrastructure. The mayor of Albuquerque is here; I know that he's working on it.

The nice thing about infrastructure projects, it's a twofer. Not only does it put to work—people to work right now, especially a lot of folks who have been laid off from the construction industry, which has been weakened, but what it's also done is it creates the framework for long-term economic growth, because if we've got better mass transit, if we've got high-speed rail, if we are rebuilding our electricity grid to get clean energy from the places that produce it to the places that need it, all that will generate economic growth above and beyond the short term. So that's another element of it.

Part of what we've done in the Recovery Act is just make sure that the damage—economic damage is not worse. So we've provided States additional resources to retain teachers and retain police officers and to make sure that if you do lose your job, you can keep your health care through COBRA, which prior to this bill was really hard for most folks to afford because you had to pay the full costs of your health care without employer subsidy. But now the Government has picked up the subsidy, and that allows a lot more people to keep health care.

So we've been doing a lot of things through the Recovery Act. The other thing we're trying to do is to stabilize the housing market, and so we have programs now in place that have helped boost refinancings, making millions of people who weren't eligible to get their homes refinanced at lower rates. That's like a tax cut. That's like money in people's pockets because your monthly rate will be lower. And if you have not recently refinanced, you should take a look at what banks are now offering, because interest rates have gone down significantly, and the programs that we've put in place have helped to spur on some of those refinancings.

We're also trying to stop the rate of foreclosure. Now, this is hard to do because housing prices have gone down so far that some people, they're just, unfortunately, not going to be able to stay in their home. They bought too much home given their incomes. But people who are at the margins, what we've done is we've said to the banks, negotiate; the banks will be better off and the consumer will be better off if you avoid foreclosure, and everybody takes a haircut.

The bank has to lose a little bit of money on what they were expecting on principal and interest. On the other hand, the homeowner, if they make this agreement with the bank, they've got to agree that when prices start going up again, they give up a little bit of equity to repay the bank. But the—either way, everybody is better off, including the community, if people stay in their homes.

So there are a whole bunch of steps that we've been taking, and we're starting to see improvements in the housing market; we're starting to see slight improvements in some of these other areas. But I have to tell you, this was a big, big, big economic problem that we had. This is like nothing that we've seen since the Great Depression. And as I said, New Mexico has been fortunate, partly because of some good administration from the New Mexican government, but also because New Mexico wasn't overbuilt at the same pace; it did not have some of the same problems as some other States.

But for the country as a whole, we took a big hit. I mean, Wall Street just was gambling with a lot of people's money, and they were taking risks they should have never taken. So we've seen trillions of dollars of wealth removed, and it's going to take some time to catch up. And a lot of people are still paying off their credit cards, and a lot of people are trying to get out from under the debts that they had accumulated when times were better.

And so we're going to have to set what I'm calling a new foundation for growth, where people are less reliant on debt, they're living more within their means; businesses are engaging in more sensible business practices, they're investing in the future and the long-term and not short-term profits; we are focusing on clean energy; we're reforming our health care system; we are boosting our education system to produce more engineers and more scientists and retraining our workers so that we've got the most productive workers in the world. That's the strategy that we're going to be pursuing in the months and years to come.

All right. It must be—it's a guy's turn. It's a guy's turn. Let me go up here, because I don't want to feel—I don't want folks up here feeling neglected. That gentleman way up there, right in the corner way up there. Look at that guy. He's all standing right in front of him. [*Laughter*]

Cooperation With Congress

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. My name is Phillip Sublitt, out of Belinda, [New] Mexico. And I'm just asking that—you're saying all these wonderful things, and it's really good to hear this, but whenever you say that we've got to get laws passed or the help to the people

that we need, we chuckle about it having to go through Congress. Well, can you break those lines of bipartisanship and get these laws and this help that we need to us, the people?

The President. Well, first of all, I think it's very important to understand that since I came into office, I have said to my Republican friends in Congress, I want to work with you. I've had them over to the White House more than they were over in the White House during the Bush administration. [*Laughter*] That's true. We have consulted with them extensively.

Now, there have been on two big issues some very fundamental disagreements with the Republican Party. And I don't doubt their sincerity; they just have a different view. One is on the stimulus package, on the Recovery Act. There were people who said we should not have Government spend that much, especially when we're inheriting a $1.3 trillion deficit from the previous administration, and we've already spent money on the TARP program and shoring up the banks, et cetera; we shouldn't do this. There are some people who made that argument.

Now, I will tell you that every serious Democratic and Republican, conservative and liberal, economist that I spoke to believed very strongly that we needed a recovery package because what was happening was consumers, they had pulled back. People weren't shopping as much because they were worried about the state of the economy, and their debts had gotten too high. Businesses were pulling back.

And so what you had was a crisis in demand, where if everybody pulls back at the same time, nobody is going shopping. If nobody is going shopping, then this young lady with her store, she doesn't have money. She may have to lay off a worker, which means that worker is now spending less, which means they're not buying groceries. And now somebody else's store shuts down. You start getting into a vicious cycle where everybody is pulling back all at the same time.

In that circumstance, the only person—or the only entity that can fill the gap is the Government, and so that's why we passed the Recovery Act. It's not because we're not worried about deficits; it's because if we didn't do anything, this economy could have really gone into a tailspin.

But I make that point only to say there's some Republicans who just philosophically were opposed to the idea of this recovery package. I have to say they weren't as worried when the previous administration was running up and doubling our national debt, but having said that, it's entirely legitimate for—that's part of what our democracy is about, to disagree with us on this.

They also disagreed on our budget because they don't believe that we should, for example, reform our health care system in a way that includes more people. They think that the free market can solve the problem. Now, I'm a strong believer in the free market, but I think that when it comes to health care, the free market only takes you so far. If your child is sick and you don't have health insurance, in a country this wealthy, we should be able to make sure that your child is cared for.

And I actually think that long term we'll spend less money when we do that, because other countries like France and Japan and a whole host of other countries, they spend less a percentage of their GDP on health care than we do. We spend more per capita than any nation on Earth, but we still have 45 million people uninsured, and in some cases, we've got worse outcomes. We've got higher infant mortality rates; we've got higher rates of some deadly diseases. That doesn't make sense.

But again, there's a philosophical difference. Having said all that, this credit card bill, when it passed in the House, we actually got 100 Republican votes. When—on our children's health insurance bill, we got some Republican votes. So the media likes to focus on where we disagree; they don't tend to focus on the areas where we are actually working together. And I think that we'll see more and more agreement over time as the Republican Party starts to realize that the American people want results right now; they don't want bickering. And when they realize that, they'll have an open, outstretched hand from me.

All right? Okay. Guys, I hate to do this, but I've only got time for one question. One more question. It's got to be a young lady. All the

guys, sit down. Why is everybody pointing at this young lady? All right, go ahead. Everybody was advocating for you.

Reforming Entitlement Programs/National Debt and Deficit

Q. Thank you so much. Thank you, President Obama. My name is Eliza Sultan. I work for Congressman Ben Lujan. The limits on earnings for people on Social Security disability are so low that it discourages people from working. For those who are hoping to be self-supporting and get off Social Security disability, like myself, would you consider raising the earning limit?

The President. You know, I think it's something that we should look at carefully. We've got a wonderful advisory group relating to people with disabilities and how we expand opportunity, and let's examine what we can do.

Now, I will tell you that Social Security disability has gone up significantly during this recession. Some of you may have read in the last couple of days that Social Security—the Social Security trust fund is worse off now because of the recession than it was. We were already having some issues with Social Security, and so we're going to have to do some significant reforms of Social Security.

So in principle, the answer is, I would like to raise the income limits to encourage people to become more self-sufficient. In practice, it costs money at—on the front end, even though long term it may save money. And what I'd like to do is examine this in the broader context of Social Security reform and Medicare/Medicaid reform.

What I'd like to do is just shift off—pivot off your question to talk about this issue of debt and deficits one more time. During a recession of this severity it is important, as I explained, for the Government to step in and fill the hole in demand that was created by consumers and by businesses, to get the economy kickstarted.

But the long-term deficit and debt that we have accumulated is unsustainable. We can't keep on just borrowing from China or borrowing from other countries, because part of it is, we have to pay for—we have to pay interest on that debt. And that means that we're mortgaging our children's future with more and more debt, but what's also true is that at some point they're just going to get tired of buying our debt. And when that happens, we will really have to raise interest rates to be able to borrow, and that will raise interest rates for everybody—on your auto loan, on your mortgage, on—so it will have a dampening effect on the economy.

So we are going to have to deal with our long-term debt. As I said before, the biggest thing that we can do on that front is to deal with entitlements. We are going through the budget, line by line, page by page, rooting out waste and abuse. We've already found $40 billion in procurement practices and no-bid contracts in—on the defense side that we are going to eliminate. We found $17 billion in programs that don't work, and we're going to stop those programs so that—120 programs—so that we can put the money into programs that do work.

We are going to go through—and by the way, I just want to make a little commentary about the media here, if you don't mind. When Congress included in last year's budget a whole bunch of earmarks, you remember there was a week worth of stories about how terrible these earmarks were. You remember this, Chip, a week worth of stories—"oh, these earmarks, this is what's blowing up the deficit; this is terrible," blah, blah, blah.

And yet, as I said before, that was less than 1 percent of that entire budget that had been signed. When we find $17 billion worth of cuts in programs, what do the same folks say? They say, "Oh, that's nothing." [*Laughter*] "Now, that's not even—that's not significant. That's not important." Well, you can't have it both ways. If those earmarks were important, then this money is important too.

But what is true about the budget—is absolutely true—is that we can cut programs, we can eliminate waste, we can eliminate abuse, we can eliminate earmarks; we could do all that stuff, and we're still got—we're still going to have a major problem, because Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, interest on the national debt.

And so I have said before, and I will repeat again, that my administration is going to seek to work with Congress to execute serious entitlement reform that preserves a safety net for our seniors, for people with disabilities, but also puts it on a firmer, stable footing so that people's retirements are going to be secure not just for this generation or—but also for the next generation.

And that's going to be hard work. It's going to require some tough choices, but I'm going to need support of the American people to get that done. That's part of what this administration is about: Let's make the tough choices now so that we've got a better future for America.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:30 a.m. at Rio Rancho High School. In his remarks, he referred to Chris Lardner, homemaker, who introduced the President, her husband Scott Gardner, owner, Rocky Mountain Stone, Inc., and their daughters Danielle and Caitlin; Reps. Ben R. Lujan, Martin Heinrich, and Harry Teague; Mayor Martin J. Chavez of Albuquerque, NM; and Chip Reid, CBS News reporter.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Burma
May 14, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication, stating that the Burma emergency is to continue for 1 year beyond May 20, 2009.

The crisis between the United States and Burma arising from the actions and policies of the Government of Burma, including its engaging in large-scale repression of the democratic opposition in Burma that led to the declaration of a national emergency in Executive Order 13047 of May 20, 1997, as modified in scope and relied upon for additional steps taken in Executive Order 13310 of July 28, 2003, Executive Order 13448 of October 18, 2007, and Executive Order 13464 of April 30, 2008, has not been resolved. These actions and policies are hostile to U.S. interests and pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to Burma and maintain in force the sanctions against Burma to respond to this threat.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
May 14, 2009.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 15. The notice of May 14 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Honoring the 2008 World Series Champion Philadelphia Phillies
May 15, 2009

The President. Thank you. Everybody, please have a seat. Welcome to the White House, and congratulations to the world champion Philadelphia Phillies.

We originally planned to do this last month, but we postponed it after the loss of the legendary voice so familiar to any sports fan, the Hall of Fame announcer, the great Harry Kalas.

And Harry left us as he lived, in the ballpark, preparing to call another game for his beloved Phillies. And I know a season without the warm comfort of his voice is difficult, but I also know this, that Harry is here with us in spirit today, and he is proud of all of you.

He waited 28 years to call another World Series championship run, and what an unbelievable run it was, full of come-from-behind wins by an underdog team that loved to prove the prognosticators wrong. And so we share something in common there, because nobody thought I was going to win either. [*Laughter*]

This is a team that never gave up. You weren't supposed to win your division. You weren't supposed to win postseason series against the Dodgers or the Rays. And even though the stretch between the top and the bottom of the sixth inning in game five took 2 full days of rain, you came out before the toughest fans in sports to win Philadelphia's first major championship since 1983.

And so this was truly a victory for both young folks, but also the young at heart, those who waited nearly three decades, and a new generation of fans that had been waiting their entire lives. It also, as I mentioned to the team back here, was not just a victory for the people of Philadelphia, but for some long-time fans like Joe Biden, and my campaign manager, David Plouffe, who—I'm not sure whether he cared more about my victory or the Phillies's victory—[*laughter*]—but it was a close call—as well as folks from the entire Delaware Valley.

This is a team made up of guys who don't quit: Cole Hamels, the unbelievable playoff ace; Chase Utley, a throwback who plays hurt and plays hard and never complains; Brad Lidge, who came to the Philly organization looking for a fresh start, and who went a perfect 48 for 48 in save opportunities all season long, and who wiped away 28 years of near-misses and heartbreak with that final strikeout.

And guys like our manager here, Charlie Manuel, who lost his mother during the playoffs. And I know how tough that is. I lost my grandmother in the middle of my election. And, Charlie, I admired your perseverance during those trying times. I know how hard that must have been on you.

Also guys like Shane Victorino—Shane, we don't get that many baseball players from Hawaii in the Majors. Where did Shane go? He was around here somewhere. He was pointing out the Hawaiian flag on the carpet in there, saying "*shaka*"—local boy. But that means that there are a lot of folks looking out for you. And then Jimmy Rollins, who, I have to say, made some telephone calls on behalf of our campaign before the election, and I couldn't be more grateful to him for that.

You know, I remember giving a campaign speech in Chester, just outside of Philadelphia, 1 week before the election. And it was the day after rain had suspended the Series game, and it was still raining. And I told my staff, if they can suspend the World Series in the middle of a game, then the least you could do is find an indoor location for my speech. [*Laughter*] That was the coldest I may have ever been. Do you remember that, Plouffe? I mean, it was cold. But true to form, thousands of Philadelphians showed up to brave the rain and my speech, just like they had shown up to watch their beloved Phillies play. And so like this team, I tried to give them my best.

I also know how it felt for the Phillies to get this weight off their back, because my beloved White Sox finally did it 3 years ago after nearly 90 years of waiting. So, Cubs fans out there, take heart. [*Laughter*] Anything is possible.

I also want to point out the example that each and every one of these guys, their wives, and the entire organization set with their time and efforts off the field. Chase works on behalf of pediatric hospitals. Brad supports our wounded warriors. Cole helps those suffering with HIV/AIDS in Africa. Ryan Howard is a national face for the Boys and Girls Clubs, participates in Make-A-Wish Foundation, and takes an active role in mentoring inner-city students, and on and on.

And just as the number of African American kids taking up baseball is in severe decline, the impact of having role models like Ryan and Jimmy to look up to just can't be measured. You know, Jimmy likes to say that nothing comes easy in Philly, and that's why I think

that so many Americans found themselves rooting for this extraordinary team. As Americans, we know a little something about being underdogs. We know a little something about coming together when times are tough. And like this team, we remember a simple truth, which is that we rise and fall together, and no one individual is bigger than the team.

So, Phillies, congratulations not only for a great season but doing it the right way. And, Manager——

Charlie Manuel. Thank you.

The President. ——great job. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:28 p.m. on the South Portico at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Vice President Joe Biden; David Plouffe, senior adviser, AKPD Message and Media; and Cole Hamels and Brad Lidge, pitchers, Chase Utley, Jimmy Rollins, and Ryan Howard, infielders, Charlie Manuel, manager, and Shane Victorino, outfielder, Philadelphia Phillies.

Statement on Military Commissions
May 15, 2009

Military commissions have a long tradition in the United States. They are appropriate for trying enemies who violate the laws of war, provided that they are properly structured and administered. In the past, I have supported the use of military commissions as one avenue to try detainees, in addition to prosecution in Article III courts. In 2006, I voted in favor of the use of military commissions. But I objected strongly to the Military Commissions Act that was drafted by the Bush administration and passed by Congress because it failed to establish a legitimate legal framework and undermined our capability to ensure swift and certain justice against those detainees that we were holding at the time. Indeed, the system of military commissions at Guantanamo Bay had only succeeded in prosecuting three suspected terrorists in more than 7 years.

Today the Department of Defense will be seeking additional continuances in several pending military commission proceedings. We will seek more time to allow us time to reform the military commission process. The Secretary of Defense will notify the Congress of several changes to the rules governing the commissions. The rule changes will ensure that: First, statements that have been obtained from detainees using cruel, inhuman, and degrading interrogation methods will no longer be admitted as evidence at trial; second, the use of hearsay will be limited, so that the burden will no longer be on the party who objects to hearsay to disprove its reliability; third, the accused will have greater latitude in selecting their counsel; fourth, basic protections will be provided for those who refuse to testify; and fifth, military commission judges may establish the jurisdiction of their own courts.

These reforms will begin to restore the commissions as a legitimate forum for prosecution, while bringing them in line with the rule of law. In addition, we will work with the Congress on additional reforms that will permit commissions to prosecute terrorists effectively and be an avenue, along with Federal prosecutions in Article III courts, for administering justice. This is the best way to protect our country, while upholding our deeply held values.

The President's Weekly Address
May 16, 2009

Good morning. Over the past few months, as we've put in place a plan to speed our economic recovery, I've spoken repeatedly of the need to lay a new foundation for lasting prosperity, a foundation that will support good jobs and rising incomes, a foundation for economic growth where we no longer rely on excessive debt and reckless risk, but instead rely on skilled workers

and sound investments to lead the world in the industries of the 21st century.

Two pillars of this new foundation are clean energy and health care. And while there remains a great deal of difficult work ahead, I'm heartened by what we've seen these past few days: a willingness of those with different points of view and disparate interests to come together around common goals, to embrace a shared sense of responsibility and make historic progress.

Chairman Henry Waxman and members of the Energy and Commerce Committee brought together stakeholders from all corners of the country and every sector of our economy to reach a historic agreement on comprehensive energy legislation. It's another promising sign of progress, as longtime opponents are sitting together at the same table to help solve one of America's most serious challenges.

For the first time, utility companies and corporate leaders are joining rather than opposing environmental advocates and labor leaders to create a new system of clean energy initiatives that will help unleash a new era of growth and prosperity.

It's a plan that will finally reduce our dangerous dependence on foreign oil and cap the carbon pollution that threatens our health and our climate. Most important, it's a plan that will trigger the creation of millions of new jobs for Americans, who will produce the wind turbines and solar panels and develop the alternative fuels to power the future. Because this we know: The nation that leads in 21st century clean energy is the nation that will lead the 21st century global economy. America can and must be that nation, and this agreement is a major step toward this goal.

But we know that our families, our economy, and our Nation itself will not succeed in the 21st century if we continue to be held down by the weight of rapidly rising health care costs and a broken health care system. That's why I met with representatives of insurance and drug companies, doctors and hospitals, and labor unions who are pledging to do their part to reduce health care costs. These are some of the groups who've been among the fiercest critics of past comprehensive health care reform plans. But today, they too are recognizing that we must act. Our businesses will not be able to compete, our families will not be able to save or spend, our budgets will remain unsustainable, unless we get health care costs under control.

These groups have pledged to do their part to reduce the annual health care spending growth rate by 1.5 percentage points. Coupled with comprehensive reform, their efforts could help to save our Nation more than $2 trillion in the next 10 years and save hard-working families $2,500 each in those coming years.

This week, I also invited Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, and other congressional leaders to the White House to discuss comprehensive health reform legislation. The House is working to pass a bill by the end of July, before they head out for their August recess. That's the kind of urgency and determination we need to achieve comprehensive reform by the end of this year. And the reductions in spending the health care community has pledged will help make this reform possible.

I've always believed that it is better to talk than not to talk, that it's far more productive to reach over a divide than to shake your fists across it. This has been an alien notion in Washington for far too long, but we're seeing that the ways of Washington are beginning to change. For the calling of this moment is too loud and too urgent to ignore. Our success as a nation, the future of our children and grandchildren depend upon our willingness to cast aside old arguments, overcome stubborn divisions, and march forward as one people and one nation.

This is how progress has always been made. This is how a new foundation will be built. We cannot assume that interests will always align or that fragile partnerships will not fray. There will be setbacks; there will be difficult days. But we're off to a good start. And I am confident that we will, in the weeks, months, and years ahead, build on what we've already achieved and lay this foundation, which will not only bring about prosperity for this generation, but for generations to come.

Thanks so much.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:15 p.m. on May 15 in the Library at the White House for broadcast on May 16. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 15 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 16.

Remarks Announcing the Nomination of Governor Jon M. Huntsman, Jr., To Be Ambassador to China
May 16, 2009

The President. Good morning, everybody. I am here to announce today the distinguished public servant I'm appointing as our Nation's new Ambassador to the People's Republic of China. I'm making this appointment mindful of its extraordinary significance. Given the breadth of issues at stake in our relationship with China, this ambassadorship is as important as any in the world, because the United States will best be able to deal effectively with global challenges in the 21st century by working in concert with China.

Now, there are few countries in the world with a past so rich or a future so full of possibility as China. With a vast population, a growing economy, and far-reaching influence, China will have a crucial role in confronting all the major challenges that face Asia and the world in the years ahead.

And that's why we're working with the Government of China to stem the financial crisis that's devastated economies around the world and help lay a foundation for sustainable growth and lasting prosperity on both sides of the Pacific. That's why I've spoken with Chinese President Hu Jintao about a number of regional threats, including the situations in North Korea and Pakistan. And that's why we will continue working together with China on a whole host of global challenges, ranging from energy and climate change to public health, from nuclear nonproliferation to terrorism and violent extremism.

I believe there's much to be gained from a closer, working relationship with China. But improved relations with China will require candor and open discussion about those issues where we don't always agree, such as human rights and democracy and free speech. And it will require that each of our nations play by the rules in open and honest competition.

And that's why this ambassadorship takes on such importance. I can think of no one better suited to take on this assignment than the Governor of the great State of Utah, Jon Huntsman.

When I asked Jon to accept this critical post, I knew it would require a sacrifice on the part of his family, and I want to thank Mary Kaye and all of their children for making this possible. I knew it would require a sacrifice from Jon, who will be giving up a seat as a popular Governor, having just been reelected to a second term. And I hope the good people of Utah will forgive me and understand how proud they should be of their Governor for his willingness to answer his Nation's call.

Finally, I knew that because Jon is not only a Republican, but a Republican who cochaired my opponent's campaign for the Presidency, this wouldn't be the easiest decision to explain to some members of his party.

But here's what I also know: I know that Jon is the kind of leader who always puts country ahead of party, is always willing to sacrifice on behalf of our Nation. That's what Jon has always done. Throughout his career, Jon has shown a willingness to move beyond the old ideologies and stale debates that all too often bring progress to a standstill. Time and again, he's brought people together across party lines to overcome our common challenges and to move our Nation forward.

What Jon brings to this post isn't just a steadfast commitment to advancing the interests of the American people; it's a lifetime of knowledge and experience that will help advance this important partnership. Jon brings to this post experience as a former Ambassador

to Singapore, who's intimately familiar with many of the most pressing challenges confronting Asia. He brings experience both in the private sector and as Deputy United States Trade Representative to Asia and Africa, where he stood up for America's economic interests abroad. And Jon is well prepared to build a partnership that reflects a new understanding between our two countries because he's lived in Asia three times and is fluent in Mandarin Chinese.

That's the kind of ambassador we need in China, an ambassador who has a respect for China's proud traditions, who understands what it will take to make America more competitive in the 21st century, and who will be an unstinting advocate for America's interests and ideals. With Jon Huntsman representing the United States in China, I'm confident that we will launch a new era of partnership between our two nations that will advance our shared dreams of opportunity and security in America, in Asia, and around the world.

So I'm extraordinarily pleased to announce that Jon Huntsman will be our Ambassador to China, and I can think of no more important assignment than creating the kinds of bridges between our two countries that will determine the well-being not just of Americans and Chinese, but also the future of the world.

So with that, I'd like to have Jon say a few words. Thank you, Jon.

Gov. Huntsman. Thanks, Mr. President.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:35 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mary Kaye, wife of Gov. Huntsman, and their children, Mary Anne, Abigail, Elizabeth, Jon III, William, Gracie Mei, and Asha; and Sen. John McCain, 2008 Republican Presidential candidate. The Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Gov. Huntsman.

Commencement Address at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana

May 17, 2009

The President. Well, first of all, congratulations, class of 2009. Congratulations to all the parents, the cousins, the aunts, the uncles, the—all the people who helped to bring you to the point that you are here today. Thank you so much to Father Jenkins for that extraordinary introduction, even though you said what I want to say much more elegantly. [*Laughter*] You are doing an extraordinary job as president of this extraordinary institution. Your continued and courageous—and contagious—commitment to honest, thoughtful dialog is an inspiration to us all.

So good afternoon. To Father Hesburgh, to Notre Dame trustees, to faculty, to family: I am honored to be here today. And I am grateful to all of you for allowing me to be a part of your graduation.

And I also want to thank you for the honorary degree that I received. I know it has not been without controversy. I don't know if you're aware of this, but these honorary degrees are apparently pretty hard to come by. [*Laughter*] So far I'm only 1 for 2 as President. [*Laughter*] Father Hesburgh is 150 for 150. [*Laughter*] I guess that's better. [*Laughter*] So, Father Ted, after the ceremony, maybe you can give me some pointers to boost my average.

I also want to congratulate the class of 2009 for all your accomplishments. And since this is Notre Dame——

[*At this point, there was a disturbance in the audience.*]

Audience members. Boo!

The President. That's all right. And since——

Audience members. We are ND! We are ND!

Audience members. Yes we can! Yes we can!

The President. We're fine, everybody. We're following Brennan's adage that we don't

do things easily. [*Laughter*] We want to—we're not going to shy away from things that are uncomfortable sometimes.

Now, since this is Notre Dame, I think we should talk not only about your accomplishments in the classroom, but also in the competitive arena. [*Laughter*] No, don't worry, I'm not going to talk about that. [*Laughter*] We all know about this university's proud and storied football team, but I also hear that Notre Dame holds the largest outdoor 5-on-5 basketball tournament in the world, Bookstore Basketball.

Now, this excites me. [*Laughter*] I want to congratulate the winners of this year's tournament, a team by the name of "Hallelujah Holla Back." [*Laughter*] Congratulations, well done. Though I have to say, I am personally disappointed that the "Barack O'Ballers" did not pull it out this year. [*Laughter*] So next year, if you need a 6'2" forward with a decent jumper, you know where I live. [*Laughter*]

Now, every one of you should be proud of what you have achieved at this institution. One hundred and sixty-three classes of Notre Dame graduates have sat where you sit today. Some were here during years that simply rolled into the next without much notice or fanfare, periods of relative peace and prosperity that required little by way of sacrifice or struggle.

You, however, are not getting off that easy. You have a different deal. Your class has come of age at a moment of great consequence for our Nation and for the world, a rare inflection point in history where the size and scope of the challenges before us require that we remake our world to renew its promise, that we align our deepest values and commitments to the demands of a new age. It's a privilege and a responsibility afforded to few generations and a task that you're now called to fulfill.

This generation, your generation, is the one that must find a path back to prosperity and decide how we respond to a global economy that left millions behind even before the most recent crisis hit, an economy where greed and short-term thinking were too often rewarded at the expense of fairness and diligence and an honest day's work.

Your generation must decide how to save God's creation from a changing climate that threatens to destroy it. Your generation must seek peace at a time when there are those who will stop at nothing to do us harm, and when weapons in the hands of a few can destroy the many. And we must find a way to reconcile our ever-shrinking world with its ever-growing diversity: diversity of thought, diversity of culture, and diversity of belief. In short, we must find a way to live together as one human family.

And it's this last challenge that I'd like to talk about today, despite the fact that Father John stole all my best lines. [*Laughter*] For the major threats we face in the 21st century—whether it's global recession or violent extremism, the spread of nuclear weapons or pandemic disease—these things do not discriminate. They do not recognize borders. They do not see color. They do not target specific ethnic groups.

Moreover, no one person or religion or nation can meet these challenges alone. Our very survival has never required greater cooperation and greater understanding among all people from all places than at this moment in history.

Unfortunately, finding that common ground, recognizing that our fates are tied up, as Dr. King said, in a "single garment of destiny," is not easy. And part of the problem, of course, lies in the imperfections of man: our selfishness, our pride, our stubbornness, our acquisitiveness, our insecurities, our egos, all the cruelties large and small that those of us in the Christian tradition understand to be rooted in original sin. We too often seek advantage over others. We cling to outworn prejudice and fear those who are unfamiliar. Too many of us view life only through the lens of immediate self-interest and crass materialism, in which the world is necessarily a zero-sum game. The strong too often dominate the weak, and too many of those with wealth and with power find all manner of justification for their own privilege in the face of poverty and injustice. And so, for all our technological and scientific advances, we see here in this country and around the globe violence and want and strife that would seem sadly familiar to those in ancient times.

We know these things, and hopefully, one of the benefits of the wonderful education that you've received here at Notre Dame is that you've had time to consider these wrongs in the

world, perhaps recognized impulses in yourself that you want to leave behind. You've grown determined, each in your own way, to right them. And yet, one of the vexing things for those of us interested in promoting greater understanding and cooperation among people is the discovery that even bringing together persons of good will, bringing together men and women of principle and purpose, even accomplishing that can be difficult.

The soldier and the lawyer may both love this country with equal passion, and yet reach very different conclusions on the specific steps needed to protect us from harm. The gay activist and the evangelical pastor may both deplore the ravages of HIV/AIDS, but find themselves unable to bridge the cultural divide that might unite their efforts. Those who speak out against stem cell research may be rooted in an admirable conviction about the sacredness of life, but so are the parents of a child with juvenile diabetes who are convinced that their son's or daughter's hardships might be relieved.

The question then is, how do we work through these conflicts? Is it possible for us to join hands in common effort? As citizens of a vibrant and varied democracy, how do we engage in vigorous debate? How does each of us remain firm in our principles and fight for what we consider right, without, as Father John said, "demonizing those with just as strongly held convictions on the other side"?

And of course, nowhere do these questions come up more powerfully than on the issue of abortion. As I considered the controversy surrounding my visit here, I was reminded of an encounter I had during my Senate campaign, one that I describe in a book I wrote called "The Audacity of Hope." And a few days after the Democratic nomination, I received an e-mail from a doctor who told me that while he voted for me in the Illinois primary, he had a serious concern that might prevent him from voting for me in the general election. He described himself as a Christian who was strongly pro-life, but that was not what was preventing him, potentially, from voting for me.

What bothered the doctor was an entry that my campaign staff had posted on my web site, an entry that said I would fight, quote, "right-wing ideologues who want to take away a woman's right to choose," unquote. The doctor said he had assumed I was a reasonable person, he supported my policy initiatives to help the poor and to lift up our educational system, but that if I truly believed that every pro-life individual was simply an ideologue who wanted to inflict suffering on women, then I was not very reasonable. He wrote, "I do not ask at this point that you oppose abortion, only that you speak about this issue in fair-minded words"—fair-minded words.

After I read the doctor's letter, I wrote back to him, and I thanked him. And I didn't change my underlying position, but I did tell my staff to change the words on my web site. And I said a prayer that night that I might extend the same presumption of good faith to others that the doctor had extended to me. Because when we do that, when we open up our hearts and our minds to those who may not think precisely like we do or believe precisely what we believe, that's when we discover at least the possibility of common ground.

That's when we begin to say, maybe we won't agree on abortion, but we can still agree that this heart-wrenching decision for any woman is not made casually, that it has both moral and spiritual dimensions.

So let us work together to reduce the number of women seeking abortions; let's reduce unintended pregnancies. Let's make adoption more available. Let's provide care and support for women who do carry their children to term. Let's honor the conscience of those who disagree with abortion, and draft a sensible conscience clause, and make sure that all of our health care policies are grounded not only in sound science, but also in clear ethics, as well as respect for the equality of women. Those are things we can do.

Now, understand, class of 2009, I do not suggest that the debate surrounding abortion can or should go away. Because no matter how much we may want to fudge it—indeed, while we know that the views of most Americans on the subject are complex and even contradictory—the fact is that at some level, the views of the two camps are irreconcilable. Each side

will continue to make its case to the public with passion and conviction. But surely we can do so without reducing those with differing views to caricature.

Open hearts, open minds, fair-minded words, it's a way of life that has always been the Notre Dame tradition. Father Hesburgh has long spoken of this institution as both a lighthouse and a crossroads, a lighthouse that stands apart, shining with the wisdom of the Catholic tradition, while the crossroads is where "differences of culture and religion and conviction can coexist with friendship, civility, hospitality, and especially love." And I want to join him and Father John in saying how inspired I am by the maturity and responsibility with which this class has approached the debate surrounding today's ceremony. You are an example of what Notre Dame is about.

Now, this tradition of cooperation and understanding is one that I learned in my own life many years ago—also with the help of the Catholic Church. You see, I was not raised in a particularly religious household, but my mother instilled in me a sense of service and empathy that eventually led me to become a community organizer after I graduated college. And a group of Catholic churches in Chicago helped fund an organization known as the Developing Communities Project, and we worked to lift up south side neighborhoods that had been devastated when the local steel plant closed.

And it was quite an eclectic crew—Catholic and Protestant churches, Jewish and African American organizers, working class black, white, and Hispanic residents—all of us with different experiences, all of us with different beliefs. But all of us learned to work side by side, because all of us saw in these neighborhoods other human beings who needed our help to find jobs and improve schools. We were bound together in the service of others.

And something else happened during the time I spent in these neighborhoods, perhaps because the church folks I worked with were so welcoming and understanding; perhaps because they invited me to their services and sang with me from their hymnals; perhaps because I was really broke and they fed me. [*Laughter*] Perhaps because I witnessed all of the good works their faith inspired them to perform, I found myself drawn not just to the work with the church, I was drawn to be in the church. It was through this service that I was brought to Christ.

And at the time, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin was the Archbishop of Chicago. And for those of you too young to have known him or known of him, he was a kind and good and wise man, a saintly man. I can still remember him speaking at one of the first organizing meetings I attended on the south side. He stood as both a lighthouse and a crossroads, unafraid to speak his mind on moral issues ranging from poverty and AIDS and abortion to the death penalty and nuclear war. And yet, he was congenial and gentle in his persuasion, always trying to bring people together, always trying to find common ground. And just before he died, a reporter asked Cardinal Bernardin about this approach to his ministry. And he said, "You can't really get on with preaching the Gospel until you've touched hearts and minds."

My heart and mind were touched by him. They were touched by the words and deeds of the men and women I worked alongside in parishes across Chicago. And I'd like to think that we touched the hearts and minds of the neighborhood families whose lives we helped change. For this, I believe, is our highest calling.

Now, you, class of 2009, are about to enter the next phase of your life at a time of great uncertainty. You'll be called to help restore a free market that's also fair to all who are willing to work. You'll be called to seek new sources of energy that can save our planet, to give future generations the same chance that you had to receive an extraordinary education. And whether as a person drawn to public service or simply someone who insists on being an active citizen, you will be exposed to more opinions and ideas broadcast through more means of communication than ever existed before. You'll hear talking heads scream on cable, and you'll read blogs that claim definitive knowledge, and you will watch politicians pretend they know what they're talking about. [*Laughter*] Occasionally, you may have the great fortune of actually seeing important issues debated by people who do know what they're talking about,

by well-intentioned people with brilliant minds and mastery of the facts. In fact, I suspect that some of you will be among those brightest stars.

And in this world of competing claims about what is right and what is true, have confidence in the values with which you've been raised and educated. Be unafraid to speak your mind when those values are at stake. Hold firm to your faith and allow it to guide you on your journey. In other words, stand as a lighthouse.

But remember, too, that you can be a crossroads. Remember, too, that the ultimate irony of faith is that it necessarily admits doubt. It's the belief in things not seen. It's beyond our capacity as human beings to know with certainty what God has planned for us or what He asks of us. And those of us who believe must trust that His wisdom is greater than our own.

And this doubt should not push us away our faith. But it should humble us. It should temper our passions, cause us to be wary of too much self-righteousness. It should compel us to remain open and curious and eager to continue the spiritual and moral debate that began for so many of you within the walls of Notre Dame. And within our vast democracy, this doubt should remind us even as we cling to our faith to persuade through reason, through an appeal whenever we can to universal rather than parochial principles, and most of all, through an abiding example of good works and charity and kindness and service that moves hearts and minds.

For if there is one law that we can be most certain of, it is the law that binds people of all faiths and no faith together. It's no coincidence that it exists in Christianity and Judaism, in Islam and Hinduism, in Buddhism and humanism. It is, of course, the Golden Rule: the call to treat one another as we wish to be treated, the call to love, the call to serve, to do what we can to make a difference in the lives of those with whom we share the same brief moment on this Earth.

So many of you at Notre Dame—by the last count, upwards of 80 percent—have lived this law of love through the service you've performed at schools and hospitals, international relief agencies and local charities. Brennan is just one example of what your class has accomplished. That's incredibly impressive, a powerful testament to this institution.

Now you must carry the tradition forward. Make it a way of life. Because when you serve, it doesn't just improve your community, it makes you a part of your community. It breaks down walls. It fosters cooperation. And when that happens, when people set aside their differences, even for a moment, to work in common effort toward a common goal, when they struggle together, and sacrifice together, and learn from one another, then all things are possible.

After all, I stand here today, as President and as an African American, on the 55th anniversary of the day that the Supreme Court handed down the decision in *Brown* v. *Board of Education.* Now, *Brown* was, of course, the first major step in dismantling the "separate but equal" doctrine, but it would take a number of years and a nationwide movement to fully realize the dream of civil rights for all of God's children. There were freedom rides and lunch counters and billy clubs; there was also a Civil Rights Commission appointed by President Eisenhower. It was the 12 resolutions recommended by this commission that would ultimately become law in the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

There were six members of this commission. It included five whites and one African American, Democrats and Republicans: two southern Governors, the dean of a southern law school, a midwestern university president, and your own Father Ted Hesburgh, president of Notre Dame. So they worked for 2 years, and at times, President Eisenhower had to intervene personally since no hotel or restaurant in the South would serve the black and white members of the commission together. And finally, when they reached an impasse in Louisiana, Father Ted flew them all to Notre Dame's retreat in Land O'Lakes, Wisconsin, where they eventually overcame their differences and hammered out a final deal.

And years later, President Eisenhower asked Father Ted how on Earth he was able to broker an agreement between men of such different backgrounds and beliefs. And Father

Ted simply said that during their first dinner in Wisconsin, they discovered they were all fishermen. [*Laughter*] And so he quickly readied a boat for a twilight trip out on the lake. And they fished, and they talked, and they changed the course of history.

Now, I will not pretend that the challenges we face will be easy, or that the answers will come quickly, or that all our differences and divisions will fade happily away, because life is not that simple. It never has been.

But as you leave here today, remember the lessons of Cardinal Bernardin, of Father Hesburgh, of movements for change both large and small. Remember that each of us, endowed with the dignity possessed by all children of God, has the grace to recognize ourselves in one another, to understand that we all seek the same love of family, the same fulfillment of a life well lived. Remember that in the end, in some way, we are all fishermen.

If nothing else, that knowledge should give us faith that through our collective labor, and God's providence, and our willingness to shoulder each other's burdens, America will continue on its precious journey towards that more perfect Union.

Congratulations, class of 2009. May God bless you, and may God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:06 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to E. Brennan Bollman, class of 2009 valedictorian, University of Notre Dame.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Indianapolis, Indiana

May 17, 2009

The President. It is great to be back in Indiana. We had a wonderful time up at Notre Dame, and I told Father John that of all the controversies surrounding my appearance, they paled in comparison to what to do about the football team. [*Laughter*] That's an issue we may not resolve within my 4 years——

Audience member. Eight!

The President. All right, well, maybe in 8 we might get it done.

Anyway, I am—it's just wonderful to be here. I see a lot of old friends, as well as new friends. We've, obviously, have been working very hard over the first 100 days to lay the foundation for the kind of economy that's going to work for all Americans. And we've seen the kind of crisis that we haven't seen since the Great Depression, and yet, despite the enormous challenges, I think that Washington has actually been a pretty energized and hopeful time because we're getting things done.

We got a Recovery Act passed. And thanks to the wonderful Members of Congress who are here, we've provided health insurance for children who didn't have it. Just this week alone we're going to be getting credit card reform done. We're going to get procurement reform done that will save us $40 billion that's been wasted in Pentagon purchases. We're going to get anti-fraud measures. We're going to get a housing bill.

This is all just in this work session just over the last several weeks. And I thank both Members of Congress, but most importantly, the American people. They just want results. We're going to continue to go through some hard times. This economy is not yet out of the woods. We're going to have enormous challenges getting health care passed so that we're driving down costs and providing coverage for all Americans. The challenges of the environment and energy and climate change are things that are going to be a heavy lift for a lot of folks. But I believe that when you look back at the end of this year, we're going to be able to say that this was one of the most productive legislative years in the history of the United States of America.

And the reason is because of you. We could not—first of all, I wouldn't be there if it weren't for you. But what's true for me is also true for the wonderful Democratic Congressmen here. If it weren't for your steady support of the DNC

and of the elections, we would not be successful.

We started my Presidential campaign 2½ years ago with this crazy idea that the American people wanted change. And nobody thought we could accomplish what seemed unimaginable at the time. And yet here we are and not only did we win an election, but more importantly, we're starting to deliver on the promises that were made.

We're going to continue to need your help. We're going to continue to need your support. But I'm absolutely confident that we're going to get it done. And so I'm grateful to you, and I look forward to being back in Indiana sometime soon.

All right, guys, appreciate you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:20 p.m. at the Westin Indianapolis. In his remarks, he referred to Father John I. Jenkins, president, University of Notre Dame. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Keep Indiana Blue Fundraiser Event in Indianapolis
May 17, 2009

Hello, Indiana. It's good to see you guys. It's good to see you. Hello, hello, hello. It is good to be here. And it's a pleasure to be with your outstanding representatives in Congress, Andre Carson, Joe Donnelly, Brad Ellsworth, Baron Hill; give it up for these outstanding Members of Congress. We're here to make sure they can stay right where they belong, in the United States Congress, representing your hopes, representing your dreams, carrying your voices to Washington, DC.

It's good to be back in Indiana. We spent a little time in Indiana. It reminds me of why I like getting out of Washington so much. People are friendly. [*Laughter*] It brings back a lot of memories from all those days out here on the campaign trail. So I want to start out tonight by saying thank you, thank you to all of you here in Indiana. I know that I'm here tonight because of you, and folks like you across this country who made the phone calls, and knocked on the doors, and registered voters, and dug deep and gave whatever you could, because you were hungry for new ideas and new leadership and a new kind of politics. And that's what we are trying to deliver right now in Washington.

You believed that after an era of selfishness and greed, we could reclaim a sense of responsibility from Main Street to Wall Street to Washington. You believed that instead of huge inequalities and bubbles that bust, we could restore a sense of fairness and stability to our economy and build a new foundation for lasting growth and prosperity. You believed that at a time of war and turmoil, we could stand strong against our enemies, stand strong for our ideals, and show a new face of American leadership around the world. That's the change you believed in, that's the trust you placed in me, that's something that I will never forget.

But we know that winning that election was just the beginning of our work. It wasn't the end, it was just the start, it was the end of the beginning. That victory alone was not the change that we sought, it was just the opportunity to make the change. And I don't know about you, but I think it's fair to say that over these past 4 months, we have seized this opportunity.

To jump-start job creation and get our economy moving again, we passed the most ambitious economic recovery package in our Nation's history. We gave tax cuts to 95 percent of working Americans and put back people to work modernizing our health care system, and rebuilding our crumbling roads and bridges and transit systems, and investing in renewable energy that could help boost our economy and preserve our planet.

We launched plans to stabilize our housing market and unfreeze our credit markets and to ensure the survival of our auto industry in this new century. We passed a budget that will cut our deficit in half while making investments to spur long-term growth.

We lifted the ban on Federal funding for stem cell research. We expanded the Children's Health Insurance Program to cover 11 million children in need. We passed a national service bill to create hundreds of thousands of opportunities to serve. We passed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, the first bill I signed into law, because we believe in equal pay for equal work.

So we're making progress. And I'm pleased with how far we've come, but I'm not satisfied. I'm confident in the future, but I am not content, not when there's still workers who are out of a job and families who can't pay the bills, not when too many Americans can't afford health care and so many of our kids are being left behind, not when our Nation has failed to lead the world in developing 21st century energy. We've come a long way, we can see some light on the horizon, but we've got a much longer journey ahead.

That's why all of you are here tonight. That's why you're digging deep again, even when times are a little tight, why I know you're going to make those calls and knock on those doors and get to the polls again next November, because we've got to make sure these four leaders continue their devoted service to Indiana and to America.

And that's why I'm here tonight. That's why I'm here, because I can't bring the change I promised all by myself. I can't rebuild our economy, and reform our health care system and our education system, and preserve our environment, and keep our Nation safe if I'm all alone in the Oval Office. That's not how our democracy works.

I need partners in Congress, people who are going to work hard every day to move this country forward. That's why I'm supporting these gentlemen. That's why I believe in Andre Carson and Joe Donnelly and Brad Ellsworth and Baron Hill. They serve their constituents and this Nation with dedication and intelligence and compassion and pride. They're determined to make a difference for the people they represent.

More than ever before, we need their help; America needs their help. We need their help to build schools that meet high standards, and close achievement gaps, and prepare our children for the 21st century challenges that they'll confront, where we reward teachers for performance and give them new pathways for advancement. And we need their help to reach the goal that I've set for higher education in this country, that by the year 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. We used to have that distinction; we don't anymore. We are going to get it back with the help of these four gentlemen right here.

We need their help to pass a comprehensive energy plan and climate bill that will finally reduce our dependence on foreign oil, cap carbon pollution that threatens our health and our climate, a plan that will create millions of new jobs producing wind turbines and solar panels and the alternative fuels that will power the future. Because we know that the nation that leads on energy, on clean energy in the 21st century, that's the nation that will lead economically, and America can and must be that nation.

I need these gentlemen's help to create a 21st century health care system that's cutting costs for families and businesses. I've already met with representatives from the insurance and drug companies, from doctors and hospitals and labor unions. These groups, some of them used to be fierce critics of health care reform back in 1993, but today, they've pledged to do their part to reduce the annual health care spending growth rate by 1.5 percent, and coupled with comprehensive reform, that could save us up to $2 trillion—$2,500 per family every year. And working with these Congressmen, we're going to do everything we can to achieve comprehensive health care reform by the end of this year. Are we going to get it done, gentlemen? This is the year to get it done.

And we need these gentlemen to help give working people in this country a fair shake again. To make sure our workers can be paid fairly and treated fairly for the work that they do. I've got to say a few words about where we're gathered tonight. It's a fine establishment. But there are workers here from Indianapolis hotels who are seeking to unionize, including some right here at the Westin. And I want to recognize these workers and offer my support for their efforts. Where are they? Raise

your hands, guys—right here. We appreciate you.

In these difficult times, our country will be stronger if management and workers come together to resolve disputes and work together to provide quality service. And workers should never be punished for demanding the right to collectively bargain. That's not right; we won't stand for it.

And finally, we need these four leaders to help us restore fiscal discipline in Washington so we don't leave our children and grandchildren with a mountain of debt. These are some of the leaders in trying to get Washington to take those responsibilities seriously. Already, my administration has identified more than 100 Government programs that we can reduce or eliminate, save $17 billion next year alone. We're going line by line through the budget, page by page, looking for even more cuts.

I've personally asked the leadership in Congress to reinstate the pay-as-you-go rule that we followed during the 1990s, a rule that will help start, a rule that helped us start this new century with a $236 billion surplus. You remember that? The idea is very simple: You don't spend what you don't have. If you want to spend, you need to find someplace else to cut. That's the rule that families across this country follow every single day, and there's no reason why their Government shouldn't do the same.

So look, Indiana, we're living through some extraordinary times. We didn't ask for the challenges we face, but we're determined to answer the call to meet them, to cast aside the old arguments, overcome the stubborn divisions, to move forward as one people.

It won't be easy, and there's going to be setbacks. It's going to take time. This is going to be a hard year, and next year is not going to be so easy either. But I promise you that we will get through this. I'll always tell you the truth about the challenges we face and the steps that we're taking, and I'll continue to measure my progress by the progress the American people are seeing in their own everyday lives.

And if you stand with me, if you stand with Andre Carson and Joe Donnelly and Brad Ellsworth and Baron Hill—[*applause*]—then I know we will look back on this moment, at the time that we came together to reclaim America's future, to write the next great chapter in the American story.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:36 p.m. at the Westin Indianapolis. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel and an Exchange With Reporters
May 18, 2009

President Obama. Well, listen, I first of all want to thank Prime Minister Netanyahu for making this visit. I think we had a extraordinarily productive series of conversations, not only between the two of us, but also at the staff and agency levels.

Obviously, this reflects the extraordinary relationship, the special relationship between the United States and Israel. It is a stalwart ally of the United States. We have historical ties, emotional ties. As the only true democracy in the Middle East, it is a source of admiration and inspiration for the American people.

I have said from the outset that when it comes to my policies towards Israel and the Middle East that Israel's security is paramount, and I repeated that to Prime Minister Netanyahu. It is in U.S. national security interests to assure that Israel's security as an independent Jewish state is maintained.

One of the areas that we discussed is the deepening concern around the potential pursuit of a nuclear weapon by Iran. It's something the Prime Minister has been very vocal in his concerns about, but is a concern that is shared by his countrymen and women across the political spectrum.

I indicated to him the view of our administration that Iran is a country of extraordinary history and extraordinary potential; that we want them to be a full-fledged member of the international community and be in a position to provide opportunities and prosperity for their people, but that the way to achieve those goals is not through the pursuit of a nuclear weapon. And I indicated to Prime Minister Netanyahu in private what I have said publicly, which is that Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon would not only be a threat to Israel and a threat to the United States, but would be profoundly destabilizing in the international community as a whole and could set off a nuclear arms race in the Middle East that would be extraordinarily dangerous for all concerned, including for Iran.

We are engaged in a process to reach out to Iran and persuade them that it is not in their interest to pursue a nuclear weapon and that they should change course. But I assured the Prime Minister that we are not foreclosing a range of steps, including much stronger international sanctions, in assuring that Iran understands that we are serious. And obviously, the Prime Minister emphasized his seriousness around this issue as well. And I'll allow him to speak for himself on that subject.

We also had an extensive discussion about the possibilities of restarting serious negotiations on the issue of Israel and the Palestinians. I have said before and I will repeat again that it is, I believe, in the interest not only of the Palestinians, but also the Israelis and the United States and the international community, to achieve a two-state solution in which Israelis and Palestinians are living side by side in peace and security.

We have seen progress stalled on this front, and I suggested to the Prime Minister that he has a historic opportunity to get a serious movement on this issue during his tenure. That means that all the parties involved have to take seriously obligations that they've previously agreed to. Those obligations were outlined in the roadmap; they were discussed extensively in Annapolis. And I think that we can—that there is no reason why we should not seize this opportunity and this moment for all the parties concerned to take seriously those obligations and to move forward in a way that assures Israel's security, that stops the terrorist attacks that have been such a source of pain and hardship, that we can stop rocket attacks on Israel, but that also allow Palestinians to govern themselves as an independent state, that allows economic development to take place, that allows them to make serious progress in meeting the aspirations of their people. And I am confident that in the days, weeks, and months to come, that we are going to be able to make progress on that issue.

So let me just summarize by saying that I think Prime Minister Netanyahu has the benefit of having served as Prime Minister previously. He has both youth and wisdom——

Prime Minister Netanyahu. I'll dispute youth, but that's good.

President Obama. ——and I think is in a position to achieve the security objectives of Israel, but also bring about a historic peace. And I'm confident that he's going to seize this moment. And the United States is going to do everything we can to be constructive, effective partners in this process.

Mr. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Netanyahu. President Obama, thank you. Thank you for your friendship to Israel and your friendship to me. You're a great leader, a great leader of the United States, a great leader of the world, a great friend of Israel, and someone who is acutely cognizant of our security concerns. And the entire people of Israel appreciate it, and I speak on their behalf.

We met before, but this is the first time that we're meeting as President and as Prime Minister. And so I was particularly pleased in your reaffirmation of the special relationship between Israel and the United States. We share the same goal, and we face the same threats. The common goal is peace. Everybody in Israel, as in the United States, wants peace. The common threat we face are terrorist regimes and organizations that seek to undermine the peace and endanger both our peoples.

In this context, the worst danger we face is that Iran would develop nuclear military capabilities. Iran openly calls for our destruction, which is unacceptable in any standard. It threatens the moderate Arab regimes in the Middle

East. It threatens U.S. interests worldwide. But if Iran were to acquire nuclear weapons, it could give a nuclear umbrella to terrorists, or worse, it could actually give terrorists nuclear weapons. And that would put us all in great peril. So in that context, I very much appreciate, Mr. President, your firm commitment to ensure that Iran does not develop nuclear military capability, and also your statement that you're leaving all options on the table.

I share with you very much the desire to move the peace process forward. And I want to start peace negotiations with the Palestinians immediately. I would like to broaden the circle of peace to include others in the Arab world, if we could, Mr. President, so this—[*inaudible*]—but one that we shouldn't let go, may be peace with the entire Arab world.

I want to make it clear that we don't want to govern the Palestinians. We want to live in peace with them. We want them to govern themselves, absent a handful of powers that could endanger the state of Israel. And for this there has to be a clear goal. The goal has to be an end to conflict. There will have to be compromises by Israelis and Palestinians alike. We're ready to do our share. We hope the Palestinians will do their share as well. If we resume negotiations, as we plan to do, then I think that the Palestinians will have to recognize Israel as a Jewish state, will have to also enable Israel to have the means to defend itself. And if those conditions are met, Israel's security conditions are met, and there's recognition of Israel's legitimacy, its permanent legitimacy, then I think we can envision an arrangement where Palestinians and Israelis live side by side in dignity, in security, and in peace.

And I look forward, Mr. President, to working with you, a true friend of Israel, to the achievement of our common goals, which are security, prosperity, and above all, peace.

President Obama. Thank you. We're going to take a couple of questions. We're going to start with Steve [Steven Hurst, Associated Press].

Iran

Q. Mr. President, you spoke at length, as did the Prime Minister, about Iran's nuclear program. Your program of engagement, policy of engagement, how long is that going to last? Is there a deadline?

President Obama. You know, I don't want to set an artificial deadline. I think it's important to recognize that Iran is in the midst of its own elections. As I think all of you, since you're all political reporters, are familiar with, election time is not always the best time to get business done. Their elections will be completed in June, and we are hopeful that, at that point, there is going to be a serious process of engagement, first through the P–5-plus-one process that's already in place, potentially through additional direct talks between the United States and Iran.

I want to reemphasize what I said earlier, that I believe it is not only in the interest of the international community that Iran not develop nuclear weapons, I firmly believe it is in Iran's interest not to develop nuclear weapons, because it would trigger a nuclear arms race in the Middle East and be profoundly destabilizing in all sorts of ways. Iran can achieve its interests of security and international respect and prosperity for its people through other means, and I am prepared to make what I believe will be a persuasive argument that there should be a different course to be taken.

The one thing we're also aware of is the fact that the history, at least, of negotiations with Iran, is that there is a lot of talk but not always action and followthrough. And that's why it is important for us, I think, without having set an artificial deadline, to be mindful of the fact that we're not going to have talks forever. We're not going to create a situation in which talks become an excuse for inaction while Iran proceeds with developing a nuclear—and deploying a nuclear weapon. That's something, obviously, Israel is concerned about, but it's also an issue of concern for the United States and for the international community as a whole.

My expectation would be that if we can begin discussions soon, shortly after the Iranian

elections, we should have a fairly good sense by the end of the year as to whether they are moving in the right direction and whether the parties involved are making progress and that there's a good faith effort to resolve differences. That doesn't mean that every issue would be resolved by that point, but it does mean that we'll probably be able to gauge and do a reassessment by the end of the year of this approach. Okay?

Do you want to call on of your——

U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Aren't you concerned that your outstretched hand has been interpreted by extremists, especially Ahmadinejad, Nasrallah, Meshal, as weakness? And since my colleague already asked about the deadline, if engagement fails, what then, Mr. President?

President Obama. Well, it's not clear to me why my outstretched hand would be interpreted as weakness.

Q. Qatar, an example.

President Obama. I'm sorry?

Q. The example of Qatar. They would have preferred to be on your side, and then moved to the extremists, to Iran.

President Obama. Oh, I think—yes, I'm not sure about that interpretation. Look, we've been in office a little over a hundred days now, close to 4 months. We have put forward a clear principle that where we can resolve issues through negotiations and diplomacy, we should. We didn't expect, and I don't think anybody in the international community or anybody in the Middle East, for that matter, would expect that 30 years of antagonism and suspicion between Iran and the United States would be resolved in 4 months. So we think it's very important for us to give this a chance.

Now, understand that part of the reason that it's so important for us to take a diplomatic approach is that the approach that we've been taking, which is no diplomacy, obviously, has not worked. Nobody disagrees with that. Hamas and Hizballah have gotten stronger. Iran has been pursuing its nuclear capabilities undiminished. And so not talking, that clearly hasn't worked. That's what's been tried. And so what we're going to do is try something new, which is actually engaging and reaching out to the Iranians.

The important thing is to make sure that there is a clear timetable of at which point we say these talks don't seem to be making any serious progress. It hasn't been tried before, so we don't want to prejudge that, but as I said, by the end of the year, I think we should have some sense as to whether or not these discussions are starting to yield significant benefits, whether we're starting to see serious movement on the part of the Iranians.

If that hasn't taken place, then I think the international community will see that it's not the United States or Israel or other countries that are seeking to isolate or victimize Iran. Rather, it is Iran itself, which is isolating itself by willing to—being unwilling to engage in serious discussions about how they can preserve their security without threatening other people's security, which, ultimately, is what we want to achieve.

It would—we want to achieve a situation where all countries in the region can pursue economic development and commercial ties and trade and do so without the threat that their populations are going to be subject to bombs and destruction. That's what I think the Prime Minister is interested in, that's what I'm interested in, and I hope that ends up being what the ruling officials in Iran are interested in as well.

Don Gonyea [National Public Radio]. Where's Don?

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Right here. Thank you. Mr. President, Mr. Prime Minister, can you each react to King Abdullah's statement of a week ago that we really are at a critical place in the conflict, and that if this moment isn't seized and if a peace isn't achieved now, soon, that in a year, year and a half, we could see renewed major conflict, perhaps war? And do you agree with that assessment?

President Obama. Why don't you start?

Prime Minister Netanyahu. I think we have to seize the moment, and I think we're fortunate in having a leader like President Obama and a new Government in Israel and perhaps a

new understanding in the Arab world that I haven't seen in my lifetime. And you're very kind to be calling me young, but I'm more than half a century old, and in my 59 years in the life of the Jewish state, there's never been a time when Arabs and Israelis see a common threat the way we see it today and also see the need to join together in working towards peace while simultaneously defending ourselves against this common threat.

I think we have ways to capitalize on this sense of urgency, and we're prepared to move with the President and with others in the Arab world if they're prepared to move as well. And I think the important thing that we discussed, among other things, is how to buttress the Israeli-Palestinian peace tracks, which we want to resume right away, with participation from others in the Arab world, how we give confidence to each other that we're changing the reality, changing the reality on the ground, changing political realities top-down as well, while we work to broaden the circle of peace. So I think that the sense of urgency that King Abdullah expressed is shared by me and shared by many others, and I definitely know it's shared by President Obama.

President Obama. Look, I think there's an extraordinary opportunity, and the Prime Minister said it well. You have Arab States in the region—the Jordanians, the Egyptians, the Saudis—who, I think, are looking for an opportunity to break this long-standing impasse but aren't sure how to do it and share concerns about Iran's potential development of a nuclear weapon. In order for us to, potentially, realign interests in the region in a constructive way, "bolstering," to use the Prime Minister's word, the Palestinian-Israeli peace track is critical.

It will not be easy. It never has been easy. In discussions, I don't think the Prime Minister would mind me saying to him—or saying publically what I said privately, which is that there is a recognition that the Palestinians are going to have to do a better job providing the kinds of security assurances that Israelis would need to achieve a two-state solution; that, you know, the leadership of the Palestinians will have to gain additional legitimacy and credibility with their own people and delivering services. And that's something that the United States and Israel can be helpful in seeing them accomplish.

The other Arab States have to be more supportive and be bolder in seeking potential normalization with Israel. And next week, I will have the Palestinian Authority President, Abbas, as well as President Mubarak, here, and I will deliver that message to them.

Now, Israel is going to have to take some difficult steps as well. And I shared with the Prime Minister the fact that under the roadmap and under Annapolis that there's a clear understanding that we have to make progress on settlements, that settlements have to be stopped in order for us to move forward. That's a difficult issue. I recognize that, but it's an important one, and it has to be addressed.

I think the humanitarian situation in Gaza has to be addressed. Now, I was along the border in Sderot and saw the evidence of weapons that had been raining down on the heads of innocents in those Israeli cities, and that's unacceptable. And so we've got to work with the Egyptians to deal with the smuggling of weapons, and it has to be meaningful, because no prime minister of any country is going to tolerate missiles raining down on their citizens' heads.

On the other hand, the fact is, is that if the people of Gaza have no hope, if they can't even get clean water at this point, if the border closures are so tight that it is impossible for reconstruction and humanitarian efforts to take place, then that is not going to be a recipe for Israel's long-term security or a constructive peace track to move forward.

So all these things are going to have to come together, and it's going to be difficult, but the one thing that I've committed to the Prime Minister is, we are going to be engaged. The United States is going to roll up our sleeves; we want to be a strong partner in this process.

I have great confidence in Prime Minister Netanyahu's political skills, but also his historical vision and his recognition that during the years that he is Prime Minister this second go-around, he is probably going to be confronted with as many important decisions about the

long-term strategic interests of Israel as any Prime Minister that we've seen in a very long time. And I have great confidence that he's going to rise to the occasion, and I actually think that you're going to see movement in—among Arab States that we have not seen before.

But the trick is to try to coordinate all this in a very delicate political environment. And that's why I'm so pleased to have George Mitchell, who is standing behind the scrum there, as our special envoy, because I'm very confident that as somebody who was involved in equally delicate negotiations in Northern Ireland, he is somebody who recognizes that if you apply patience and determination and you keep your eye on the long-term goal that the Prime Minister articulated, which is a wide-ranging peace, not a grudging peace, not a transitory peace, but a wide-ranging, regional peace, that we can make great progress. Okay?

Israel/Iran/Palestinian Authority

Q. Mr. President, the Israeli Prime Minister and the Israeli administration have said on many occasions—on some occasions that only if the Iranian threat will be solved, they can achieve real progress on the Palestinian threat. Do you agree with that kind of linkage?

And to the Israeli Prime Minister, you were speaking about the political track. Are you willing to get into final status issues, negotiations like borders, like Jerusalem, in the near future, based on the two-states solution? And do you still hold this opinion about the linkage between the Iranian threat and your ability to achieve any progress on the Palestinian threat?

President Obama. Well, let me say this. There's no doubt that it is difficult for any Israeli Government to negotiate in a situation in which they feel under immediate threat. That's not conducive to negotiations. And as I've said before, I recognize Israel's legitimate concerns about the possibility of Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon when they have a President who has in the past said that Israel should not exist. That would give any leader of any country pause.

Having said that, if there is a linkage between Iran and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, I personally believe it actually runs the other way. To the extent that we can make peace with the Palestinians—between the Palestinians and the Israelis, then I actually think it strengthens our hand in the international community in dealing with a potential Iranian threat.

Having said that, I think that dealing with Iran's potential nuclear capacity is something that we should be doing even if there already was peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians. And I think that pursuing Israeli-Palestinian peace is something that is in Israel's security interests and the United States national security interests, even if Iran was not pursuing a nuclear weapon. They're both important.

And we have to move aggressively on both fronts. And I think that based on my conversations with Prime Minister Netanyahu, he agrees with me that they're both important. That's not to say that he's not making a calculation, as he should, about what are some of the most immediate threats to Israeli's security, and I understand that.

But, look, imagine how much less mischief a Hizballah or a Hamas could do if in fact we had moved a Palestinian-Israeli track in a direction that gave the Palestinian people hope. And if Hizballah and Hamas is weakened, imagine how that impacts Iran's ability to make mischief and vice versa. I mean, so obviously, these things are related, but they are important separately. And I'm confident that the United States, working with Israel, can make progress on both fronts.

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Thank you. We've had extraordinarily friendly and constructive talks here today, and I'm very grateful to you, Mr. President, for that. We want to move peace forward, and we want to ward off the great threats.

There isn't a policy linkage, and that's what I hear the President saying, and that's what I'm saying too. And I've always said, there's not a policy linkage between pursuing simultaneously peace between Israel and the Palestinians and the rest of the Arab world and trying to deal with removing the threat of a nuclear Iran.

There are causal links. The President talked about one of them. It would help, obviously, unite a broad front against Iran if we had peace between Israel and the Palestinians. And conversely, if Iran went nuclear, it would threaten

the progress towards peace and destabilize the entire area and threaten existing peace agreements.

So it's very clear to us. I think we actually—we don't see closely on this; we see exactly eye to eye on this, that we want to move simultaneously and then parallel on two fronts: the front of peace and the front of preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear capabilities.

On the front of peace, the important thing for me is to resume negotiations as rapidly as possible, and to—and my view is less one of terminology, but one of substance. And I ask myself, what do we end up with? If we end up with another Gaza—the President has described to you there's rockets falling out of Gaza—that is something we don't want to happen, because a terror base next to our cities that doesn't call—recognize Israel's existence, calls for our destruction, and asks for our destruction is not our view of peace.

If, however, the Palestinians recognize Israel as the Jewish state, if they fight terror, if they educate their children for peace and to a better future, then I think we can come at a substantive solution that allows the two peoples to live side by side in security and peace and, I add, prosperity, because I'm a great believer in this.

So I think the terminology will take care of itself, if we have the substantive understanding. And I think we can move forward on this. I have great confidence in your leadership, Mr. President, and in your friendship to my country and in your championing of peace and security. And the answer is, both come together; peace and security are intertwined. They're inseparable.

And I look forward, Mr. President, to working with you to achieve both.

President Obama. Good. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:21 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George J. Mitchell; and President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran. Prime Minister Netanyahu referred to King Abdullah II of Jordan. A reporter referred to Hassan Nasrallah, leader of the Lebanese political-paramilitary organization Hizballah; and Khaled Meshal, leader of the Palestinian political-paramilitary organization Hamas.

Statement on Haitian Flag Day
May 18, 2009

The United States and Haiti share a deeply intertwined history and a long standing friendship. In 1779, freemen from the French colony of Saint Domingue, now the Republic of Haiti, came to the aid of American patriots fighting for freedom at the Siege of Savannah. Today, we remain connected by a Haitian American community that contributes greatly to the economic, social, cultural, scientific, and academic fabric of the United States and by my administration's steadfast commitment to come to the aid of those in Haiti working to ensure that Haiti's future is stable, sustainable, and prosperous. On this Haitian Flag Day, I am proud to send my warm wishes and those of the American people to the people of Haiti and the Haitian Diaspora as they celebrate during Haitian Heritage Month.

Remarks on Fuel Efficiency Standards
May 19, 2009

Thank you very much. Thank you. Please, everybody have a seat. What an extraordinary day. The sun is out because good things are happening. Before I get started, just some preliminary introductions, I'll probably repeat them in my formal remarks, but I want to make sure that I acknowledge some people who have been critical to this effort and

critical to so many efforts at the State and Federal levels.

First of all, Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who has just been cracking the whip and, you know, making Congress so productive over these last several days; we are grateful for her. My wonderful Secretary of Transportation, Ray LaHood, is in the house; Lisa Jackson, the outstanding Administrator of EPA. Some of the finest Governors in the country are here. Let me take them in order of good looks—sorry, Arnold—[*laughter*]—Jennifer Granholm of Michigan, Governor Deval Patrick of Massachusetts, and Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger of California.

Barbara Boxer just had to leave—but the head of the Environment Committee in the Senate, who's done just outstanding work. And Senators Feinstein, Levin, and Stabenow couldn't be here because they're busy voting on credit card legislation that we're going to get done before Memorial Day. And we've got two outstanding Members of the House of Representatives: John Dingell—where's John?—right here—the dean of the House and—who's done so much extraordinary work around these issues and Sandy Levin. Please give them a round of applause.

I also want to mention Ron Gettelfinger of the UAW, our president, who's just been a great leader during some very trying times in the auto industry, and Carol Browner, who helped to make this all happen today. Please give Carol Browner a big round of applause.

Since I'm acknowledging everybody—I'm in a voluble mood today—[*laughter*]—let me go ahead and acknowledge my other members of the Cabinet who are here who are part of our energy green team and do just outstanding work on an ongoing basis: first of all, my Secretary of Labor, Hilda Solis; the guy who's just cleaning up the Department of Interior and doing an extraordinary job, Ken Salazar; our head of HUD, Shaun Donovan; and our Commerce Secretary, Gary Locke.

Now, thank you all for coming to the White House today and for coming together around what I consider to be a historic agreement to help America break its dependence on oil, reduce harmful pollution, and begin the transition to a clean energy economy.

This is an extraordinary gathering. Here we have today standing behind me, along with Ron Gettelfinger and leadership of the UAW, we have 10 of the world's largest auto manufacturers; we have environmental advocates as well as elected officials from all across the country.

And this gathering is all the more extraordinary for what these diverse groups, despite disparate interests and previous disagreements, have worked together to achieve. For the first time in history, we have set in motion a national policy aimed at both increasing gas mileage and decreasing greenhouse gas pollution for all new trucks and cars sold in the United States of America. And I want to applaud the leadership of the folks at the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Transportation, and the White House Office of Energy and Climate Change, who've worked around the clock on this proposal which has now been embraced by so many.

Now, in the past, an agreement such as this would have been considered impossible. It's no secret that these are folks who've occasionally been at odds for years, even decades. [*Laughter*] In fact, some of the groups here have been embroiled in lawsuits against one another. So that gives you a sense of how impressive and significant it is that these leaders from across the country are willing to set aside the past for the sake of the future.

For what everyone here believes, even as views differ on many important issues, is that the status quo is no longer acceptable. While the United States makes up less than 5 percent of the world's population, we create roughly a quarter of the world's demand for oil. And this appetite comes at a tremendous price, a price measured by our vulnerability to volatile oil markets, which send gas prices soaring and families scrambling. It's measured by a trade deficit where as much as 20 percent of what we spend on imports is spent on oil. It's measured in billions of dollars sent to oil-exporting nations, many that we do not choose to support, if we had a choice. It's measured in a changing climate, as sea levels rise and droughts spread, forests burns and storms rage.

And what is all the more tragic is that we've known about these costs in one way or another since the gas shortages of the 1970s. And yet all too little has been done. Calls for action rise and fall with the price of a barrel of oil. Worn arguments are traded across entrenched divides, urgency fades, complacency grows, and time passes.

As a result, we have done little to increase the fuel efficiency of America's cars and trucks for decades. Think about this. Consider how much has changed all around us. Think of how much faster our computers have become. Think about how much more productive our workers are. Think about how everything has been transformed by our capacity to see the world as it is, but also to imagine a world as it could be.

And that's what's been missing in this debate for too long, and that's why this announcement is so important, for it represents not only a change in policy in Washington, but the harbinger of a change in the ways business is done in Washington. No longer will we accept the notion that our politics are too small, our Nation too divided, our people too weary of broken promises and lost opportunities to take up a historic calling. No longer will we accept anything less than a common effort made in good faith to solve our toughest problems. And this is what this agreement seeks to achieve.

Right now the rules governing fuel economy in this country are inadequate, uncertain, and in flux. First, there is the standard for fuel economy administered by the Department of Transportation. On top of that, the Environmental Protection Agency, in response to a decision by the Supreme Court, may have to set limits on greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles, establishing another standard. California has sought permission under the Clean Air Act to require that vehicles sold in California meet yet another, even stricter emission rule. And 13 States and the District of Columbia have agreed to adopt California greenhouse gas reductions if the permission, called a waiver, is granted.

Now, car companies might then face three different sets of overlapping requirements, one administered by the Department of Transportation, one administered by the EPA, and still a third administered by California and 13 other States. This proposed national policy, under the leadership of two agencies and bringing together 14 States, 10 companies, as well as auto workers and environmental groups, changes all that. The goal is to set one national standard that will rapidly increase fuel efficiency, without compromising safety, by an average of 5 percent each year between 2012 and 2016, building on the 2011 standard my administration set shortly after taking office.

A series of major lawsuits will be dropped in support of this new national standard. The State of California has also agreed to support this standard, and I want to applaud California and Governor Schwarzenegger and the entire California delegation for their extraordinary leadership. They have led the way on this, as they have in so many other efforts to protect the environment. In addition, because the Department of Transportation and EPA will adopt the same rule, we will avoid an inefficient and ineffective system of regulations that separately govern the fuel economy of autos and the carbon emissions they produce.

And at a time of historic crisis in our auto industry, when domestic auto manufacturers are making painful choices and restructuring their businesses to be viable in the future, this rule provides the clear certainty that will allow these companies to plan for a future in which they are building the cars of the 21st century.

Yes, it costs money to develop these vehicles, but even as the price to build these cars and trucks goes up, the cost of driving these vehicles will go down as drivers save money at the pump. And this is a point I want to emphasize: If you buy a car, your investment in a more fuel-efficient vehicle, as a result of this standard, will pay off in just 3 years. In 3 years time, you will have paid off the additional investment required. So this is a winning proposition for folks looking to buy a car. In fact, over the life of a vehicle, the trip—typical driver would save about $2,800 by getting better gas mileage.

And the fact is, everyone wins. Consumers pay less for fuel, which means less money

going overseas and more money to save or spend here at home. The economy as a whole runs more efficiently by using less oil and producing less pollution. And companies like those here today have new incentives to create the technologies and the jobs that will provide smarter ways to power our vehicles.

And that's why, in the next 5 years, we're seeking to raise fuel-economy standards to an industry average of 35.5 miles per gallon in 2016, an increase of more than 8 miles per gallon per vehicle. That's an unprecedented change, exceeding the demands of Congress and meeting the most stringent requirements sought by many of the environmental advocates represented here today.

As a result, we will save 1.8 billion barrels of oil over the lifetime of the vehicles sold in the next 5 years. Just to give you a sense of magnitude, that's more oil than we imported last year from Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, Libya, and Nigeria combined. Here's another way of looking at it: This is the projected equivalent of taking 58 million cars off the road for an entire year.

I also want to note that the agreement we have announced today is part of a far larger effort. In fact, on the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue, Henry Waxman is chairing a meeting of the Energy and Commerce Committee, which is working on an equally historic energy bill that will not only help our dependence on foreign oil, prevent the worst consequences of climate change, and build a clean energy economy but will provide more than $15 billion to help build the cars and trucks of the future right here in America.

And the recovery plan we've put in place, as well as the budget that builds on it, makes historic investments in a clean energy economy, doubling our capacity to generate renewable energy like wind and solar, investing in new battery technologies for plug-in hybrids, and building a smarter, stronger grid on which the homes, businesses, and vehicles of the future will run.

Now, too often lost in the back-and-forth of Washington politics, absent in arguments where the facts opponents use depend on the conclusions they've already reached, absent all that is this: Ending our dependence on oil, indeed, ending our dependence on fossil fuels represents perhaps the most difficult challenge we have ever faced, not as a party, not as a set of separate interests, but as a people.

We have, over the course of decades, slowly built an economy that runs on oil. It has given us much of what we have, for good, but also for ill. It has transformed the way we live and work, but it's also wreaked havoc on our climate. It has helped create gains in prosperity unprecedented in history, but it also places our future in jeopardy.

Ending this dependence will take time. It will take an incredible effort. It will take a historic investment in innovation. But more than anything, it will take a willingness to look past our differences, to act in good faith, to refuse to continue the failures of the past, and to take on this challenge together, for the benefit not just of this generation, but generations to come.

All the people who have gathered here today, all the auto executives, all our outstanding elected officials and appointees, Ron Gettelfinger, Members of Congress, Governors, all these folks here today have demonstrated that this kind of common effort is possible. They've created the template for more progress in the months and years to come. Everything is possible when we're working together, and we're off to a great start.

So thank you everybody. Appreciate it.

[*At this point, the President greeted participants of the event on stage. He then returned to the podium and continued as follows.*]

By the way, I just want to mention, I think I still have my Ford parked in Chicago. [*Laughter*] It's a Ford hybrid—runs great. You guys should take a look. [*Laughter*] But there are also some outstanding hybrids and energy-independent cars represented up here, so I didn't want to just advertise for one. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:22 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Ron Gettelfinger, president, International Union, United Automobile,

Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW); and Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change Carol M. Browner.

Remarks Following a Meeting on the United States Nonproliferation Policy
May 19, 2009

The President. Hello, everybody. I just had a wonderful discussion with four of the most preeminent national security thinkers that we have, a bipartisan group of George Shultz, Henry Kissinger, Bill Perry, and Sam Nunn, all who've come together and helped inspire policies of this administration in a speech that I gave to Prague, which set forward a long-term vision of a world without nuclear weapons.

I don't think anybody would accuse these four gentlemen of being dreamers. They're hard-headed, tough defenders of American interests and American security. But what they have come together to help galvanize is a recognition that we do not want a world of continued nuclear proliferation, and that in order for us to meet the security challenges of the future, America has to take leadership in this area.

This is particularly true at a time when countries like North Korea and Iran are in the process of developing nuclear weapons capacity, at a time when we see a country like Pakistan with a large nuclear arsenal on the other side of a long-running conflict in the subcontinent with India, at a time when terrorist organizations like Al Qaida are trying to seek fissile material. It is absolutely imperative that America takes leadership, working with not just our Russian counterparts, but countries all around the world, to reduce and ultimately eliminate the dangers that are posed by nuclear weapons.

And we can take some very specific steps in order to do this. We can revitalize our Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. We can work with the Russians, as the two countries with by far the largest nuclear stockpiles, to continue to reduce our dependence on nuclear weapons. We can move forward on a comprehensive test ban treaty. It's going to require more work, but I think that we can get something accomplished there and we can lock down loose nuclear weapons that could fall into the hands of terrorists.

We are going to be pushing this as one of our highest priorities, to take specific steps, measurable steps, verifiable steps, to make progress on this issue, even as we keep a long-term perspective and a long-term vision about what can be achieved. And we can think of no better advisers, counselors, and partners in this process than the four gentlemen who joined us here today.

We also think this is a reminder of the long tradition of bipartisan foreign policy that has been the hallmark of America at moments of greatest need, and that's the kind of spirit that we hope will be reflected in our administration.

So with that, let me just allow George to make a brief statement on behalf of the group.

Former Secretary of State George Schultz. All four of us support enthusiastically what the President is doing, as expressed eloquently in his speech in Prague. First of all, we all noted on your White House web site that the first sentence was: "We will work for a world free of nuclear weapons." That's the vision we all support.

The second sentence is: "As long as nuclear weapons are around, we will be sure we have a strong deterrent ourselves." So we support that notion that we must be conscious of our national security all the way along to zero.

Then we were really impressed to see that you had such a constructive meeting with the President of Russia. And there the two of you, the countries with most of the—over 90 percent of the nuclear weapons, pledged together to seek a world free of nuclear weapons.

And in your Prague speech, you linked the vision to steps, and you identified a few of the steps. And we think that's just the way to proceed, that there is an interaction between the vision, which you need, which requires you to think of the steps and know where you're

going and the steps which need to be taken to show that the vision has a reality to it, and we're getting there.

So all four of us, Mr. President, support what you're doing. I would only have one word of slight disagreement. You said that you welcome the fact that this is bipartisan. And, well, it is. At the same time, I think all of us have said, when people have told that to us, that it's really nonpartisan. This is a subject that ought to somehow get up above trying to get a partisan advantage. And it's of such importance that we need to take it on its own merits. And that's the way we've proceeded. And that's the way, at least it seems to us, you've proceeded.

The President. Thank you so much, George. And thank you all, gentlemen, for joining us. This is going to be an ongoing collaboration. We're very grateful to them. And we're grateful to you guys for taking time to listen.

Thanks a lot.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:38 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Participating in the meeting were former Secretary of State George P. Schultz; former Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger; former Secretary of Defense William J. Perry; and former Sen. Samuel A. Nunn, Jr. Former Secretary of State Schultz referred to President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Honoring National Small Business Award Winners
May 19, 2009

The President. Well, thank you very much. Good afternoon, everybody.

Audience members. Good afternoon.

The President. And thank you, Lisa. I think you can see that she's pretty good at making a pitch. [*Laughter*] And we're grateful for sharing your story and your enthusiasm with all of us, and congratulations to you and everybody who is being honored here today as some of America's most outstanding business owners and lenders and counselors and coaches.

I want, also, all of you to know that I am so pleased with my selection as SBA Administrator. Karen Mills is somebody who is passionate about small business; she understands the ins and outs of it, the nuances of it. She is fighting for bringing SBA into the 21st century. And so I think you'll find just an outstanding partner in her, please give her a big round of applause.

Running a successful small business is impressive in any year, but it's especially impressive this year, at this moment when we're facing the most serious economic downturn in generations. And I know what you do isn't easy. I know that for every contract you've won, every sale that you've made and job you've created, you've had plenty of setbacks and false starts and late nights wondering how on Earth you're going to keep everything together and why you decided to take this path in the first place.

But you kept going. You scrimped and you saved and you borrowed and you improvised. And your failures didn't discourage you, they educated you and they motivated you to succeed the next time around. And today we honor that courage and determination and daring just as much as we honor the success that it ultimately brought you.

And that's the spirit that led Lisa, a single mom, a former hairstylist—you know, the hair looks good, so you—[*laughter*]——

Lisa Anne Pineiro. I'm good. I'm good. I cut hair in the back room. [*Laughter*]

The President. In the back room, while she's scooping ice cream—[*laughter*]——

Ms. Pineiro. Running the construction company. [*Laughter*]

The President. ——running the construction company, she's been doing her hair. [*Laughter*]

Ms. Pineiro. I do.

The President. I think there was a song about you, wasn't there? [*Laughter*]

Ms. Pineiro. "She works hard for the money"—[*laughter*].

The President. To set out a little over a year ago—a little over 10 years ago with nothing but a loan from her parents and a big idea, and her

company now has 78 employees; it's grossed nearly $4 million in sales last year.

It's what led Tom Masterson—where's Tom? Tom's right here. Tom, after working for 30 years in the electrical industry, to cofound T.E.M. Electric, funded it entirely on his own and working out of his living room until he won his first major contract. Today, the company employs 75 people and has over $12 million in revenues.

It's what led Andy Wells, a member of the Red Lake Ojibwa Tribe, to invest $1,300 back in 1989—where's Andy? Right here—$1,300 back in 1989 to found Wells Technology, manufacturing industrial tools and fasteners and creating jobs near reservations in Minnesota, where he lives. In 2008, his company generated $54 million in revenues, and his customers included Coca-Cola and Boeing and Oshkosh.

So small businesses like these are driving our economy. You're the job creators, responsible for half of all private sector jobs. You're innovators, producing 13 times more patents per employee than large companies. You're the starting point for the products and brands that have redefined the market. After all, Google started out as a small business; that was a research project. Hewlett-Packard began with two guys in a garage. The first Apple computers were built by hand, one at a time. McDonald's started with just one restaurant.

And small businesses don't just strengthen our economy, they also strengthen our communities. Your customers aren't just anonymous folks who buy what you sell, they're your friends, they're your neighbors. The place where you set up shop often isn't just your business address, but it's also your hometown, and sometimes it's your home. And I know what you do to give back: sponsoring sports leagues and service projects; serving on boards; donating to charities; mentoring other small-business owners to help them be as successful as you are.

So with all that you do for this Nation, I think our Nation's Government should be there to support you, to help you grow and expand and succeed. So I'm pleased that nearly all of you have benefited from SBA's services, from SBA loans, programs, advice, counseling. And I'm pleased about that, but I'm not satisfied. I think we can do more. We can do more to help small-business owners, especially right now.

And that's why our recovery plan raises the guarantees on SBA loans to 90 percent, eliminates costly fees for borrowers and lenders, and includes a series of tax cuts for small businesses, as well as incentives to encourage investment in small businesses. And that's why my proposed budget reduces the capital gains tax for investments in smaller startup businesses to zero—zero capital gains tax.

That's why I intend to pass comprehensive health care reform this year, so we can lower costs, raise quality, and make it easier for many of you to not only get health care for your employees, but also for yourselves.

And that's why we're announcing a new SBA loan program, the America's Recovery Capital, or ARC, program. And this new program will provide up to $35,000 to help struggling, but still creditworthy, small businesses pay off non-SBA debts, money they can use to pay suppliers and vendors, or pay down credit card debts. And the loans will be guaranteed 100 percent by the SBA, and they'll be available starting June 15th. And I believe they will be a lifeline to help viable small businesses through these difficult times.

So all of this is a good start, but it's only a start. We still have much work ahead to support our small businesses and restore our economy. It won't be easy. We'll need to be bold and creative and take risks, just like all of you have done. But that's always been the American story, that belief that all things are possible, that we are limited only by our willingness to take a chance and work hard to achieve our dreams. I'm confident that we will do exactly that. Together, we are going to meet the challenges of our times.

So congratulations again to all of you for what you have succeeded. And please make sure to keep feeding us good ideas, so that we can help you help the American economy and the American people. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:45 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his

remarks, he referred to Lisa Anne Pineiro, president and founder, Technical Services, Inc., who introduced the President; Karen G. Mills, Administrator, Small Business Administration; Thomas E. Masterson, president and cofounder, T.E.M. Electric Co., Inc.; and Andrew Wells III, president and chief executive officer, Wells Technology.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Stabilization in Iraq
May 19, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent the enclosed notice to the *Federal Register* for publication. This notice states that the national emergency with respect to the stabilization of Iraq declared in Executive Order 13303 of May 22, 2003, as modified in scope and relied upon for additional steps taken in Executive Order 13315 of August 28, 2003, Executive Order 13350 of July 29, 2004, Executive Order 13364 of November 29, 2004, and Executive Order 13438 of July 17, 2007, is to continue in effect beyond May 22, 2009.

Obstacles to the orderly reconstruction of Iraq, the restoration and maintenance of peace and security in the country, and the development of political, administrative, and economic institutions in Iraq continue to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. Accordingly, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency with respect to this threat and maintain in force the measures taken to deal with that national emergency.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
May 19, 2009.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 20. The notice of May 19 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks During a Quarterly Meeting of the President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board
May 20, 2009

The President. Everybody please have a seat. I apologize we're starting late. It's Rahm's fault. Where's Rahm? [*Laughter*]

Q. Still late. [*Laughter*]

The President. Right, exactly. It is good to see all of you again. I know that many of you have been busy working with Paul and others on some of the financial issues that we continue to confront in the economy. We're pleased that we've seen some progress, that there is some return to normalcy in certain aspects of the financial markets. We think that that will be helpful overall.

But obviously, one of the things that I've been concerned about since I took office is looking beyond the immediate crisis in front of us to find out what is a sustainable economic model post-bubble and bust. How do we create sound fundamentals on issues like education, on health care, and the topic that we're going to discuss today, energy, as well as all the innovation that's required around these various areas, so that moving forward, we don't find ourselves in a unsustainable economic model?

And we have seen this week some fairly extraordinary steps being taken around energy,

which are promising. Yesterday I stood out in the Rose Garden and announced that the automakers, the unions, State and local officials, as well as the Federal Government, were coming up with a uniform national fuel efficiency standard that will provide certainty to the automakers and take a real bite out of our level of oil dependence and over time reduce our dependency on foreign oil.

At the same time, you've got an Energy Committee in the House of Representatives which is making more progress than we would have ever expected around the issue of greenhouse gases and carbon pollution.

So you're seeing industry, labor, and government working together more cooperatively, in a better spirit, than we've seen in a very long time. But this is a huge, complicated, difficult issue. I know that sometimes the slogans about clean energy and green energy may be a little more forward-leaning than the realities of the numbers of jobs that are currently being produced or the technologies that are currently available.

And so one of the roles that I thought we could play today is to try to flesh out a little bit: what can we get done; where are immediate opportunities that we should be taking advantage of; what are some major challenges; how realistic are some of our projections around clean energy and how much of them are dependent on technological breakthroughs that we don't yet foresee; and how does this affect those who are not in the energy sectors but have, nevertheless, a significant interest in how this will affect overall economic growth.

So I wanted to start with John Doerr, who's done as much work on this as anybody as a venture capitalist, but somebody who sort of digs in and gets his hands dirty on these issues and understands the technology behind a lot of these questions.

And, John, why don't you share with us sort of more broadly how you're thinking about some of these issues?

[*At this point, John Doerr, partner, Kleimer Perkins Caufield & Byers, made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Doerr. I want to close with my views on an optimistic note, and that is that we are seeing breakthroughs in the technology that not only can get us where we need to be, but that can make sure that America is the worldwide leader in developing the jobs and the businesses and the wealth from this industry as it was the case with the Internet.

The President. Jeff, do you want to talk about this from a big manufacturing company that both uses energy, but also works on the technologies that might save in energy usage?

[*Jeffrey R. Immelt, chairman and chief executive officer, General Electric Company, made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Immelt. I would say these 50,000 jobs in this brutal recession are the most robust jobs we have. We're shipping products around the world. We ship about 150 heavy-duty gas turbines. Three will go to the U.S.; 147 go to the rest of the world. So we're doing well.

The President. So this is actually an area—this is an area where we could develop a strong export market if we're——

Mr. Immelt. I think we have to think about it that way, Mr. President. We've got to move on. Other countries around the world are doing the same things, and there's no reason why we should cede leadership to other people.

The President. How far behind are we technologically to other countries, Jeff, John?

Mr. Immelt. Look, I would say that innovation exists here. You know, Europe's at 10 percent renewables; we're at 2 or 3 percent. Other nations of the world, like China, Finland, France, are building nuclear power. We haven't started yet. We're doing the first whole gasification plant in 25 years in Indiana. So the brains exist in this country. I think what we have to use is our domain to really build cost positions and competitiveness that can be globally competitive. But they're the types of products, Mr. President, that we can build great export industries around.

The President. Rich, the—I know from a labor perspective, one of the biggest concerns you guys have is the decline in manufacturing.

Richard L. Trumka. Absolutely.

The President. And the—and we've actually got a task force that's working up some ideas about stabilizing and then growing our manufacturing base. This is one area where we're seeing some potential. I'm wondering if you just wanted to touch on sort of how the AFL–CIO is thinking about clean energy and its potential for creating solid middle class jobs.

[*Mr. Trumka, secretary-treasurer, AFL–CIO, made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Trumka. Our members are excited. We've already started creating the training programs and the jobs. They're already starting to help green the country, and we think it's a win-win-win for this country and for the people of this country. And we applaud your leadership in the area.

The President. I want to open it up with—Martin, I'd be interested in your views on this. I mean, this is one of those areas where you can have some pretty fierce economic debates around the efficacy of a cap and trade versus a carbon tax, whether the Government getting involved in this area helps in significantly sparking a clean energy revolution, or whether this is going to happen due to innovation in the private sector without Government catalyzing it.

And so to the extent that there's any skepticism in the room, and you're always good for that—[*laughter*]—I wanted to make sure that that got put on the table and that we had a realistic conversation about some of these policies.

[*Martin Feldstein, president emeritus, National Bureau of Economics Research, made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Feldstein. The other point is about whether you auction or give away some of these permits. The price has to go up by the same amount. The cost to the consumer has to go up by the same amount, whether you auction it off or you give it away.

The President. Right.

Mr. Feldstein. So I have a hard time understanding the giveaway strategy, because it seems to me that just says we'll take some of the money that would otherwise be collected by the Government, that revenue, and give it to some of these firms that win this lottery to get some of these——

The President. Well, as you know, during the campaign, my original proposal was a 100 percent auction so that you didn't have the potential for political considerations or gaming of the system. The way I think that the Waxman-Markey bill is trying to address this is you've got regional differences that have to be accommodated; some of it has to do with how do you, if not hold the consumers harmless, then assure that the rebates or the allocations that are awarded are leveling out the cost to consumers.

So it may not—it ends up not being as arbitrary as, I think, it might seem in the abstract. In the particulars, there are just some regions in the country, particularly in the Midwest and the South, where their options for ramping up energy efficiencies quickly are very different from California or some of the northeast cities. And so you want them to make adjustments. On the other hand, if the adjustments are too onerous, too quick, not only is it brutal on those States, which are already having trouble, but politically it ends up being pretty difficult.

Mr. Feldstein. So this is for regulated electricity, basically?

The President. Mostly around the electricity issue.

Mr. Feldstein. Because for gasoline and other products——

The President. For gasoline that makes less sense. Now, I haven't seen all the details of the bill yet. Carol, you may end up having a better sense. Larry, do you want to chime in on this one?

National Economic Council Director Lawrence H. Summers. If we had—I'm having a cluck out of you—ask a student, Marty. I understood your—I understood very well the——

The President. Marty really doesn't like to admit to that, by the way. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Feldstein. No, I take great pride in my students, Larry high on that list.

[*Director Summers made brief remarks, followed by brief remarks by Assistant to the President for Energy and Climate Change Carol M. Browner.*]

The President. Jim, you've got some thoughts as a big manufacturer that operates internationally. You probably see some of these as opportunities, but I know you may see some risk as well, so I'm putting you in a competitive disadvantage.

[*James W. Owens, chairman and chief executive officer, Caterpillar, Inc., made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Owens. Our concern and one of the things we've been very engaged with the U.S. cap initiative discussing is, we need to approach this in an international context. I think if we move unilaterally as the United States, with a significant cap and trade program that drives up the cost of carbon here significantly, and our international competitors, their countries don't move with us, it's going to create competitive problems for the core—let's call it the base industries: steel, aluminum, cement—the core feeder stock, if you will, for the manufacturing industry in this country.

But I think if we take that leadership role, as you've articulated it, and go to the—Copenhagen with that in hand as showing our commitment to move forward, I think there's a good chance that we'll find the Indians and the Chinese, for example, the two largest emerging markets—and big growth markets, by the way, for U.S. exports—likely to want to work with us. And I think there's more opportunity for collaboration on the international scale than some people are giving us credit for here.

The President. That's what we've been seeing.

Mr. Owens. I think there's—it's out there.

The President. Yes, well, I want to bring maybe some of the finance guys, because you crunch the numbers, you're looking for opportunities where it makes sense to invest, where it doesn't. Mark, how is this looking from a investor perspective, from a——

[*Mark T. Gallogly, founder and managing partner, Centerbridge Partners, L.P., made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Gallogly. The second thing I think that could really impact this is whether you have a national standard or not. I know the administration supports a national standard, a national energy standard for alternatives. There's a real—there's been real success on a State-by-State basis, but many States, as you pointed out earlier, don't have alternatives, don't have the ability to produce alternatives. In the southeast there's not a lot of—if you're in the southeast, not a lot of wind, there's not a lot of real sun power, so you're not going to see much alternative generation there.

And energy moves across States, and so you've got to figure out a way, just as you're thinking through emissions for auto on a national basis, to think about a national standard for energy. I think if you did those two things, in addition to a carbon, then you have a realistic likelihood of achieving the goals. If you don't have those three coming together, I think the likelihood is less—materially less.

The President. Anything to add to that, Roger?

[*Roger W. Ferguson, Jr., president and chief executive officer, TIAA–CREF, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Now, one of the things that when our energy team gets together we talk about is that the lowest hanging fruit, the area where technology's already available, is on the efficiency side. We don't need breakthroughs as much as we just need the proper incentives to take advantage of that.

And so I wanted to maybe just talk about that for a moment. And I'd be interested, Penny, from a real estate perspective, because buildings, it turns out, alongside cars, is the area where there is just enormous waste. On the other hand, the real estate industry as a whole, residential and commercial, are obviously under—feeling enormous pressure right now.

And so the question is whether there is an appetite for retrofitting old buildings, dealing with energy efficiency in what is already a difficult economic environment. And are there some additional things that we need to do if in fact we're going to move in that direction?

[*Penny Pritzker, chairman and founder, Pritzker Realty Group, made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Ms. Pritzker. So I think incentives are enormously—I think you could put a lot of people to work doing this, because it's not only for the residential but also large commercial buildings. There's enormous work to be done.

The President. Thanks. Carol, do you want to talk to us briefly about some of the steps that we're already taking on the efficiency front, and are there questions for this group that we're still puzzling over?

[*Assistant Browner made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Assistant Browner. One of the things we've been interested in is, are there other steps we can take. Yesterday the President exercised his executive authority in pressing his national car standards to an historic level of reduction. Are there things we could do on the efficiency side? We understand some of the appliance things we can do, but there are other things you all are aware of where we have some executive authorities that the President could exercise that would be helpful to know.

The President. John, did you want to comment on this?

Mr. Doerr. There's two thoughts. And I think the most powerful one would be somehow to use your bully pulpit to get the Nation's utilities to be rewarded just as much or more from saving electrons as they're now rewarded for producing electrons.

The President. And the California utilities have done some interesting work on that.

Mr. Doerr. The California experience with this has been terrific.

The President. Do you want to just describe that real quickly in case people aren't familiar with what they've done.

[*Mr. Doerr made brief remarks.*]

The President. Let me bring in some of the folks who I haven't had the chance to hear from—Robert, any thoughts on this from a banking perspective?

[*Robert Wolf, chairman and chief executive officer, UBS Group Americas, made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Wolf. So I would just say we have to be—I think we shouldn't—we should fast-forward it because of the importance, but I do think we should make sure that we understand what we're going to be trading and who are the participants, because, as we know from what—the industry I'm in, once we see something that's an openly traded free market, we will have many more participants than we thought. And I think we have to be very careful on it, therefore. And I know that we're going to add that to some of the language in something we're going to be sending you soon.

The President. That's important.

Larry, we've been talking about how we—mechanisms—the—avoid some of the problems that Robert was discussing.

Director Summers. Absolutely, yes. We've been working very much to have the right kind of framework in so that the markets function in the right—function in the right way, yes.

The President. David, have you got anything to add on this?

[*David F. Swenson, chief information officer, Yale University, made brief remarks, followed by brief remarks by Mr. Immelt, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Immelt. I think that's the way to accelerate some of these projects, is to get the financing for big projects going forward. And I think not in a stimulus way, in terms of just purely Government, but taking an energy bank, quote, unquote, and allowing private business to invest side by side on these projects, whether it's smart grid or wind power or any of those. I think that could be a stimulative impact to get that going. I know some of those discussions have been going on with the Department of Energy.

And then beyond that, just ramping up the Ex-Im to get behind some of these products as we globalize. I think that's another tool that we've got to get things going faster.

The President. Right.

Monica, do you want to talk about this from a small-business perspective? Are you seeing an interest among small businesses and—on the energy front? I've seen some small businesses that are starting to do—take advantage of some of the retrofitting and weatherization opportunities.

[*Monica C. Lozano, publisher and chief executive officer, La Opinion, made brief remarks.*]

The President. What I'd like to do, I think—how much time do we have? I think we have probably about 10 minutes—10, 15 minutes. What I'd like to do is broaden the conversation a little bit. I want to make sure that Charles and Anna, Laura—I haven't heard from you guys, so feel free to—Bill—feel free to talk about energy.

But this—Monica offers, actually, a pretty good segue. One of the things that we're wrestling with is how do we deal with job creation and employment. We expect that—and I'm not making any predictions here, because this is being web-streamed—[*laughter*]—we expect that there's going to be some stabilizing of the economy, that the contraction will end and begin—the engines of the economy will start to turn again.

But as all of you know, employment is a lagging indicator. We have shed a huge number of jobs during this deleveraging period. And the concern that we have is, even in a stabilized situation, there is the prospect of higher unemployment for some time to come. And so I've been really pushing my economic team around the issue of job creation and, alongside the issue of job creation, being able to create career paths for people so that they're upgrading their jobs and upgrading their incomes, because one of the problems that we saw during the nineties, even with very low unemployment and robust job creation, what you weren't seeing was significant increases in real incomes.

So those are two areas that we're spending a lot of time thinking about. Clean energy is, obviously, a huge opportunity for job creation. We've talked about that, but if people want to broaden it to some other areas or give us suggestions of things we should be looking at that you haven't been seeing us look at or pay as much attention to, that would be helpful.

So, Charles, do you want to—start with you?

[*Charles E. Phillips, Jr., president, Oracle Corporation, made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Phillips. But no one talked about this 5 years ago, and now every single conversation, before people can decide where to build a data center, they want to know how they can get the power.

The President. So it's not just my 10-year-old daughter, keeping her iPod plugged in and not taking it out of the socket. [*Laughter*] That's just one small manifestation of the larger problem.

Mr. Phillips. Right, and ours have to stay on 24/7, so we consume a lot of power. And so if we can get alternative sources, I think it actually opens up roads for our industry.

The President. That's interesting.

Anna.

[*Anna Burger, secretary-treasurer, Service Employees International Union, made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Ms. Burger. The partnership that's gone on between the environmental communities, the truck drivers with the Teamsters, and the larger, broader community has really come up with a new model that will have energy efficient trucks, which will be good for the workers, good for the community——

The President. Energy efficient trucks that aren't just sitting there idling.

Ms. Burger. And so a change in the whole mechanism of how you do it is important.

[*Ms. Burger made further brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Ms. Burger. I think that there are lots of ways if people—public workers can get together and talk a lot about what they could do to retrofit their buildings, to have better energy practices, to really think about greening it. So I think that this partnership opportunity is

here because you're leading it. And I think that if we all got to come together, we can actually move this forward.

The President. Good. Bill, any thoughts on some of the general questions that we've been asking? You have, obviously, experience in regulating big markets. We're looking at creating a market here. Robert raised some questions about the potential problems involved. I'd be interested in your views on that.

[*William H. Donaldson, former Chairman, Securities and Exchange Commission, made brief remarks, followed by brief remarks by Mr. Immelt.*]

Mr. Feldstein. For those of us who work in the service industries, like education or health care, we don't want to knock that too much.

Mr. Immelt. No, no, no——

Mr. Feldstein. That's been the only thing that's provided jobs——

Mr. Immelt. I just think there's going to have to be some balance——

[*Mr. Wolf made brief remarks.*]

Mr. Immelt. When I came to work for GE in 1982——

President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board Chairman Paul A. Volcker. Increase our productivity rating——

The President. Well, I think the fact that some really good math whiz kids are going into engineering as opposed to derivatives is not a terrible thing.

Chairman Volcker. Fewer financial engineers and more real engineers.

The President. But I think that there's no doubt that manufacturing is not going to return to the share of the economy that it was in the 1950s, regardless of what our policies are, just because our manufacturing is extraordinarily efficient compared to what it was.

On the other hand, what is true is that if we are going to at least have a larger element of exports, for example, as a proportion of our economy, which I think we're going to need—we've had this idea that we can just be the consumers of everything and not—and borrow and spend. And at some point, we've got to start selling something. Some of that is going to have to be top-notch products.

Some of it will be services and that helps our current economy as well. But if on energy, for example, we're just importing Spanish windmills or wind turbines, as opposed to some that are made here in the United States, that would be a shame, and I think we need to take advantage of that.

Penny, you wanted to jump in.

Ms. Pritzker. I just wanted to underscore something Anna said. We've had some of the best innovation, in terms of clean activities, in our hotels coming from our employees, and it's come from the bottom up. We challenged our employee base to come up with creative ideas of how to do cleaning without using chemicals, how to better recycle, how to use less.

And so I think there's a really interesting opportunity to use the bully pulpit and to highlight how the partnerships are working at the local level in some very major——

The President. Telling some good stories, yes.

Ms. Pritzker. ——and to really celebrate that and raise the pride as to this is really an important endeavor in our country.

The President. Okay.

Laura, I wanted to get you in here and the—you're a wonderful generalist, as well as a specialist. One thing I was interested in is how this fits into what you're seeing internationally, because there is a concern voiced by Rich, but I suspect Jim and others are going to be concerned about it, we're moving in an area where, as Marty said, there are going to be some increased costs related to this. And if we don't see some concerted action on the other side, we're going to be placed at a disadvantage.

[*Laura D'Andrea Tyson, dean, Haas School of Business, University of California at Berkeley, made brief remarks.*]

The President. We're out of time. Jim, you want to jump in right quick; Mark, you want to jump in, and then Paul, I'll let you wrap up.

[*Mr. Owens made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Owens. You asked about what do we have to do structurally different going forward. That's one of the reset buttons we've got to hit, and that's a tough one. It's tough for political leaders to help bring about that change, and I think the business community has got to be part of helping the public understand. We've got to save more, invest more, and grow our international competitiveness as a key to our future success.

The President. Mark.

Mr. Gallogly. I was just going to add something to follow up on what Laura said. If you think about the competitive dynamic internationally for green, since other parts of the world are just growing their demand for energy just much faster than we are—so China is high single digits, low double digits—and because they have a centralized authority that can allow for, for example, a smart grid being put in place much faster than we can, those two things will naturally result in them developing better technologies faster, because their whole market actually has more demand. So we're fighting a fight that will require us to be more on our game than we have to be in a general sense because they have a natural, clear advantage, but governmentally and demand-wise.

The President. Okay. Paul.

[*Chairman Volcker made brief remarks, concluding as follows.*]

Mr. Volcker. The only other point I'd make, all the time this is discussed, and the cost, there isn't enough emphasis, it seems to me, on the cost of what happens if we don't do anything. If any of these projections are halfway correct, it's going to cost amounts of money that make this stuff we're talking about trivial. And I don't think that that's impressed enough upon—I know it's out in the distance so it's hard politically, but there it is. And I just don't——

The President. I haven't found anything that was easy politically yet. [*Laughter*]

Chairman Volcker. We'll produce that at the next meeting.

[*Austan Goolsbee, Staff Director and Chief Economist, President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board, made brief remarks.*]

The President. Well, you guys have done a terrific job. Obviously, there have been a bunch of smaller groups that are working intensively with our economic team.

Chairman Volcker. We've got five or six things——

The President. They've got five or six things already on the plate. This has been extraordinarily helpful. I appreciate all of you coming in.

If you can keep your seats just for a moment, we're going to bring a pool spray in just to record who it is that was in the meeting, although we've had some press folks in here taking assiduous notes, I'm sure.

Go ahead.

[*The White House press pool entered the room.*]

The President. Hello, everybody. Well, you will have a record of everything that was said here, so we don't need to repeat it.

I just want to publicly thank this group, chaired by Paul Volcker, staffed by Austan Goolsbee. They are doing extraordinary work, separate and apart from meetings with me, on a whole range of issues. We talked about energy today, but they are helping to advise us in our approach to the financial regulations regulatory regime that we are looking to put before Congress this year. They are helping us in thinking about employment, manufacturing. There is a whole host of issues that this group is providing wonderful expertise for.

And interestingly enough, as Paul mentioned at the end of this discussion, there is impressive consensus, not perfect consensus, but an impressive overlap of views about the importance of us getting out front on energy; the enormous job-creation potential that exists; the requirements to create a more efficient energy system in order for us to remain competitive.

And I'm excited about the opportunity. We've seen some great progress this week.

We're going to see more because of the contributions that are made around this table.

So thank you very much, everybody. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:38 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to White House Chief of Staff Rahm I. Emanuel. Also participating in the meeting was Christina D. Romer, Chair, Council of Economic Advisers. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary included the full proceedings of the meeting.

Remarks on Signing the Fraud Enforcement and Recovery Act of 2009 and Legislation To Prevent Mortgage Foreclosures and Enhance Mortgage Credit Availability

May 20, 2009

Good morning, everybody—good afternoon. Please, everybody, have a seat. Everybody have a seat. It is wonderful to see all of you. Four months ago today, we took office amidst unprecedented economic turmoil. And ever since that day, we've worked aggressively across all fronts to end this crisis and to build a new foundation for our lasting prosperity. Step by step, I believe we're moving in the right direction.

I know my administration will be judged by various markers. But there's only one measure of progress that matters to me, and that's the progress that the American people see in their own lives, day to day, because right now, despite progress, too many Americans are hurting. They're Americans desperate to find a job or unable to make ends meet despite working multiple jobs, Americans who pay their bills on time but can't keep their heads above water, Americans living in fear that they're one illness or one accident away from losing their home, hard-working Americans who did all the right things, met all of their responsibilities, yet still find the American Dream slipping out of reach.

Now, much of what caused this crisis was an era of recklessness, where short-term gains were too often prized over long-term prosperity. And too often in our Nation's Capital, we said the right words, we patted ourselves on the back, but ultimately, failed to do what we were actually sent here to do. And that is to stand up to the special interests and stand up for the American people.

Well, standing up for the American people is exactly what we're doing here today with two bills that I'm about to sign, the Helping Families Save Their Homes Act and the Fraud Enforcement and Recovery Act. These landmark pieces of legislation will protect hard-working Americans, crack down on those who seek to take advantage of them, and ensure that the problems that led us to this crisis never happen again.

Thanks in large part to some of the men and women here, both onstage as well as in the audience, each bill passed by overwhelmingly bipartisan majorities. But we wouldn't be here without the leadership of my good friend, Chris Dodd. And I want to thank him and Senator Richard Shelby. Now, Chris and Richard Shelby over on the Senate side, and then on the House side, Chairman Barney Frank and Representative Maxine Waters have done a great job. And I want to thank Senators Patrick Leahy and Chuck Grassley, as well as Representatives Conyers and Bobby Scott, for leading the way on the fraud enforcement bill.

Now, these two laws, together with the comprehensive credit card reforms that I hope to sign later this week, represent fundamental change that will help ensure a fair shake for hard-working Americans. And I think it's important for people to understand the significance of this week. This has been one of the most productive congressional work periods in some time. And I am grateful to have Harry Reid here, as well as Nancy Pelosi who could not be here, and the other key Members of Congress for assigning these measures the urgency that they deserve and that the times demand.

Let me talk a little bit about the housing bill. The Helping Families Save Their Homes Act advances the goals of our existing housing plan by providing assistance to responsible homeowners and preventing avoidable foreclosures. Now, last summer, Congress passed the HOPE for Homeowners Act to help families who found themselves underwater as a result of declining home values, families who owed more on their mortgages than their homes are worth. But too many administrative and technical hurdles made it very difficult to navigate, and most borrowers didn't even bother to try.

This bill removes those hurdles, getting folks into sustainable and affordable mortgages, and more importantly, keeping them in their homes. And it expands the reach of our existing housing plan for homeowners with FHA or USDA rural housing loans, providing them with new opportunities to modify or refinance their mortgages to more affordable levels.

Because many responsible renters are being unfairly evicted from homes that go through foreclosure because the owners haven't been paying their mortgages, it requires banks to honor existing leases or provide at least 90 days notice for renters on month-to-month leases.

And because far too many Americans go homeless on any given night, this bill provides comprehensive new resources for homeless Americans, focusing specifically on families with children, the fastest growing segment of the homeless population.

So altogether, it's a bill that builds on the housing plan we already put into action to stabilize the housing market and stem foreclosures. And because of that plan, all of you should know that interest rates are down, refinancings are up, and Americans who participate can save up to $2,000 a year—in effect, a $2,000 pay cut per family—tax cut, excuse me. They don't need pay cuts. [*Laughter*] That wouldn't be a good bill. [*Laughter*]

Any American who wants to learn more about this plan should visit makinghomeaffordable.gov. And thanks to the efforts of the men and women gathered up here, more families will stay in their homes, more neighborhoods will remain vibrant and whole, more dreams will be defended, and America will take another step from recession to recovery.

So what I'm going to do now is, I'm going to sign the housing bill, and then I'll talk a little bit about the antifraud bill. All right.

[*At this point, the President signed the bill.*]

Let's get the rest of this crew up here.

The other bill that I'm signing today gives prosecutors and regulators new tools to crack down on what's helped cause this crisis in the first place, and that's the twin scourges of mortgage fraud and predatory lending.

Now, last year, the Treasury Department received 62,000 reports of mortgage fraud, more than 5,000 each month. The number of criminal mortgage fraud investigations opened by the FBI has more than doubled over the past 3 years. And yet, the Federal Government's ability to investigate and prosecute these frauds is severely hindered by outdated laws and a lack of resources.

And that's why this bill nearly doubles the FBI's mortgage and financial fraud program, allowing it to better target fraud in hard-hit areas. And that's why it provides the resources necessary for other law enforcement and Federal agencies, from the Department of Justice to the SEC to the Secret Service, to pursue these criminals, bring them to justice, and protect hard-working Americans affected most by these crimes. It's also why it expands DOJ's authority to prosecute fraud that takes place in many of the private institutions not covered under current Federal bank fraud criminal statutes, institutions where more than half of all subprime mortgages came from as recently as 4 years ago.

And furthermore, it allows DOJ to prosecute anyone who fraudulently obtains Recovery Act or TARP funds, precious taxpayer dollars we've carefully invested in order to turn this crisis around. And finally, it creates a bipartisan Financial Markets Commission to investigate the financial practices that brought us to this point, so that we make sure a crisis like this never happens again.

Our current troubles were born of eroding home values and portfolio values, but also an

erosion of our common values. So if we want to fully dig ourselves out of this crisis, we're going to need to do more than just change policy. We need all of us to live up to our responsibilities. Government must set the rules of the road that are fair and fairly enforced. Banks and lenders must end the practices that added to this mess. Individuals must take responsibility for their own actions. And all of us must learn to live within our means again.

I believe we're moving in the right direction. But I want to remind everybody that it took many years and many failures to get us here, and it's going to take some time to get us out. The stock market will rise and fall. The job market has taken a beating and won't be back immediately. The housing market still has a long way to go. But I'm confident we will get there. And if we keep at it, if we all do our part to usher in a new era of responsibility, then I'm convinced that we will recover from this recession, and we're going to come out on the other side stronger and more prosperous as a nation and as a people.

So with that, I'm going to sign the Fraud Enforcement and Recovery Act along with these extraordinary legislators who helped to make it happen. Give them a big round of applause.

[*The President signed the bill.*]

All right. There we go.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:38 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. S. 386, approved May 20, was assigned Public Law No. 111–21; and S. 896, approved May 20, was assigned Public Law No. 111–22.

Statement on Signing the Fraud Enforcement and Recovery Act of 2009
May 20, 2009

Today I have signed into law S. 386, the "Fraud Enforcement and Recovery Act of 2009." This Act provides Federal investigators and prosecutors with significant new criminal and civil tools to assist in holding accountable those who have committed financial fraud. These legislative enhancements will help the Department of Justice to combat mortgage fraud, securities and commodities fraud, and related offenses, and to protect taxpayer money that has been expended on recent economic stimulus and rescue packages. With the tools that the Act provides, the Department of Justice and others will be better equipped to address the challenges that face the Nation in difficult economic times and to do their part to help the Nation respond to this challenge.

Section 5(d) of the Act requires every department, agency, bureau, board, commission, office, independent establishment, or instrumentality of the United States to furnish to the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, a legislative entity, any information related to any Commission inquiry. As my Administration communicated to the Congress during the legislative process, the executive branch will construe this subsection of the bill not to abrogate any constitutional privilege.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
May 20, 2009.

NOTE: S. 386, approved May 20, was assigned Public Law No. 111–21.

Remarks at the National Archives and Records Administration
May 21, 2009

Good morning, everybody. Please be seated. Thank you all for being here. Let me just acknowledge the presence of some of my outstanding Cabinet members and advisers. We've got our Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton. We have our CIA Director, Leon Panetta. We have

our Secretary of Defense, William [Robert]* Gates; Secretary Napolitano of Department of Homeland Security; Attorney General Eric Holder; my National Security Adviser, Jim Jones. And I want to especially thank our Acting Archivist of the United States, Adrienne Thomas.

I also want to acknowledge several Members of the House who have great interest in intelligence matters. I want to thank Congressman Reyes, Congressman Hoekstra, Congressman King, as well as Congressman Thompson for being here today. Thank you so much.

These are extraordinary times for our country. We're confronting a historic economic crisis. We're fighting two wars. We face a range of challenges that will define the way that Americans will live in the 21st century. So there's no shortage of work to be done or responsibilities to bear.

And we've begun to make progress. Just this week, we've taken steps to protect American consumers and homeowners and to reform our system of Government contracting so that we better protect our people while spending our money more wisely. The—it's a good bill. [*Laughter*] The engines of our economy are slowly beginning to turn, and we're working towards historic reform on health care and on energy. And I want to say to the Members of Congress, I welcome all the extraordinary work that has been done over these last 4 months on these and other issues.

In the midst of all these challenges, however, my single most important responsibility as President is to keep the American people safe. It's the first thing that I think about when I wake up in the morning. It's the last thing that I think about when I go to sleep at night.

And this responsibility is only magnified in an era when an extremist ideology threatens our people and technology gives a handful of terrorists the potential to do us great harm. We are less than 8 years removed from the deadliest attack on American soil in our history. We know that Al Qaida is actively planning to attack us again. We know that this threat will be with us for a long time, and that we must use all elements of our power to defeat it.

Already, we've taken several steps to achieve that goal. For the first time since 2002, we're providing the necessary resources and strategic direction to take the fight to the extremists who attacked us on 9/11, in Afghanistan and Pakistan. We're investing in the 21st century military and intelligence capabilities that will allow us to stay one step ahead of a nimble enemy. We have reenergized a global nonproliferation regime to deny the world's most dangerous people access to the world's deadliest weapons. And we've launched an effort to secure all loose nuclear materials within 4 years. We're better protecting our border and increasing our preparedness for any future attack or natural disaster. We're building new partnerships around the world to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaida and its affiliates. And we have renewed American diplomacy so that we once again have the strength and standing to truly lead the world.

And these steps are all critical to keeping America secure. But I believe with every fiber of my being that in the long run we also cannot keep this country safe unless we enlist the power of our most fundamental values. The documents that we hold in this very hall, the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, these are not simply words written into aging parchment. They are the foundation of liberty and justice in this country and a light that shines for all who seek freedom, fairness, equality, and dignity around the world.

I stand here today as someone whose own life was made possible by these documents. My father came to these shores in search of the promise that they offered. My mother made me rise before dawn to learn their truths when I lived as a child in a foreign land. My own American journey was paved by generations of citizens who gave meaning to those simple words: "to form a more perfect union." I've studied the Constitution as a student; I've taught it as a teacher; I've been bound by it as

* White House correction.

a lawyer and a legislator. I took an oath to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution as Commander in Chief. And as a citizen, I know that we must never, ever, turn our back on its enduring principles for expedience sake.

I make this claim not simply as a matter of idealism. We uphold our most cherished values not only because doing so is right, but because it strengthens our country and it keeps us safe. Time and again, our values have been our best national security asset in war and peace, in times of ease and in eras of upheaval.

Fidelity to our values is the reason why the United States of America grew from a small string of colonies under the writ of an empire to the strongest nation in the world. It's the reason why enemy soldiers have surrendered to us in battle, knowing they'd receive better treatment from America's Armed Forces than from their own government. It's the reason why America has benefited from strong alliances that amplified our power and drawn a sharp, moral contrast with our adversaries. It's the reason why we've been able to overpower the iron fist of fascism and outlast the Iron Curtain of communism and enlist free nations and free peoples everywhere in the common cause and common effort of liberty.

From Europe to the Pacific, we've been the nation that has shut down torture chambers and replaced tyranny with the rule of law. That is who we are. And where terrorists offer only the injustice of disorder and destruction, America must demonstrate that our values and our institutions are more resilient than a hateful ideology.

After 9/11, we knew that we had entered a new era; that enemies who did not abide by any law of war would present new challenges to our application of the law; that our Government would need new tools to protect the American people, and that these tools would have to allow us to prevent attacks instead of simply prosecuting those who tried to carry them out.

Unfortunately, faced with an uncertain threat, our Government made a series of hasty decisions. I believe that many of these decisions were motivated by a sincere desire to protect the American people. But I also believe that all too often, our Government made decisions based on fear rather than foresight; that all too often, our Government trimmed facts and evidence to fit ideological predispositions. Instead of strategically applying our power and our principles, too often we set those principles aside as luxuries that we could no longer afford. And during this season of fear, too many of us—Democrats and Republicans, politicians, journalists, and citizens—fell silent.

In other words, we went off course. And this is not my assessment alone. It was an assessment that was shared by the American people, who nominated candidates for President from both major parties who, despite our many differences, called for a new approach, one that rejected torture and one that recognized the imperative of closing the prison at Guantanamo Bay.

Now let me be clear: We are indeed at war with Al Qaida and its affiliates. We do need to update our institutions to deal with this threat. But we must do so with an abiding confidence in the rule of law and due process, in checks and balances and accountability. For reasons that I will explain, the decisions that were made over the last 8 years established an ad hoc legal approach for fighting terrorism that was neither effective nor sustainable, a framework that failed to rely on our legal traditions and time-tested institutions and that failed to use our values as a compass. And that's why I took several steps upon taking office to better protect the American people.

First, I banned the use of so-called enhanced interrogation techniques by the United States of America. Now, I know some have argued that brutal methods like waterboarding were necessary to keep us safe. I could not disagree more. As Commander in Chief, I see the intelligence; I bear the responsibility for keeping this country safe. And I categorically reject the assertion that these are the most effective means of interrogation. What's more, they undermine the rule of law. They alienate us in the world. They serve as a recruitment tool for terrorists and increase the will of our enemies to fight us, while decreasing the will of others to work with America. They risk the lives of our troops by making it less likely that others will surrender to them in battle and more likely that Americans

will be mistreated if they are captured. In short, they did not advance our war and counterterrorism efforts; they undermined them. And that is why I ended them once and for all.

Now, I should add, the arguments against these techniques did not originate from my administration. As Senator McCain once said, torture "serves as a great propaganda tool for those who recruit people to fight against us." And even under President Bush, there was recognition among members of his own administration—including a Secretary of State, other senior officials, and many in the military and intelligence community—that those who argued for these tactics were on the wrong side of the debate and the wrong side of history. That's why we must leave these methods where they belong, in the past. They are not who we are, and they are not America.

Now, the second decision that I made was to order the closing of the prison camp at Guantanamo Bay. For over 7 years, we have detained hundreds of people at Guantanamo. During that time, the system of military commissions that were in place at Guantanamo succeeded in convicting a grand total of three suspected terrorists. Let me repeat that: three convictions in over 7 years. Instead of bringing terrorists to justice, efforts at prosecution met setback after setback, cases lingered on, and in 2006, the Supreme Court invalidated the entire system. Meanwhile, over 525 detainees were released from Guantanamo under not my administration, under the previous administration. Let me repeat that: Two-thirds of the detainees were released before I took office and ordered the closure of Guantanamo.

There is also no question that Guantanamo set back the moral authority that is America's strongest currency in the world. Instead of building a durable framework for the struggle against Al Qaida that drew upon our deeply held values and traditions, our Government was defending positions that undermined the rule of law. In fact, part of the rationale for establishing Guantanamo in the first place was the misplaced notion that a prison there would be beyond the law, a proposition that the Supreme Court soundly rejected. Meanwhile, instead of serving as a tool to counter terrorism, Guantanamo became a symbol that helped Al Qaida recruit terrorists to its cause. Indeed, the existence of Guantanamo likely created more terrorists around the world than it ever detained.

So the record is clear. Rather than keeping us safer, the prison at Guantanamo has weakened American national security. It is a rallying cry for our enemies. It sets back the willingness of our allies to work with us in fighting an enemy that operates in scores of countries. By any measure, the costs of keeping it open far exceed the complications involved in closing it. That's why I argued that it should be closed throughout my campaign, and that is why I ordered it closed within 1 year.

And the third decision that I made was to order a review of all pending cases at Guantanamo. I knew when I ordered Guantanamo closed that it would be difficult and complex. There are 240 people there who have now spent years in legal limbo. In dealing with this situation, we don't have the luxury of starting from scratch. We're cleaning up something that is, quite simply, a mess, a misguided experiment that has left in its wake a flood of legal challenges that my administration is forced to deal with on a constant, almost daily basis, and it consumes the time of Government officials whose time should be spent on better protecting our country.

Indeed, the legal challenges that have sparked so much debate in recent weeks here in Washington would be taking place whether or not I decided to close Guantanamo. For example, the court order to release 17 Uighurs—17 Uighur detainees took place last fall, when George Bush was President. The Supreme Court that invalidated the system of prosecution at Guantanamo in 2006 was overwhelmingly appointed by Republican Presidents, not wild-eyed liberals. In other words, the problem of what to do with Guantanamo detainees was not caused by my decision to close the facility; the problem exists because of the decision to open Guantanamo in the first place.

So—now let me be blunt: There are no neat or easy answers here. I wish there were. But I can tell you that the wrong answer is to

pretend like this problem will go away if we maintain an unsustainable status quo. As President, I refuse to allow this problem to fester; I refuse to pass it on to somebody else. It is my responsibility to solve the problem. Our security interests will not permit us to delay. Our courts won't allow it, and neither should our conscience.

Now, over the last several weeks, we've seen a return of the politicization of these issues that have characterized the last several years. I'm an elected official; I understand these problems around—arouse passions and concerns. They should. We're confronting some of the most complicated questions that a democracy can face. But I have no interest in spending all of our time relitigating the policies of the last 8 years. I'll leave that to others. I want to solve these problems, and I want to solve them together as Americans.

And we will be ill-served by some of the fearmongering that emerges whenever we discuss this issue. Listening to the recent debate, I've heard words that, frankly, are calculated to scare people rather than educate them, words that have more to do with politics than protecting our country. So I want to take this opportunity to lay out what we are doing and how we intend to resolve these outstanding issues. I will explain how each action that we are taking will help build a framework that protects both the American people and the values that we hold most dear. And I'll focus on two broad areas: first, issues relating to Guantanamo and our detention policy; but, second, I also want to discuss issues relating to security and transparency.

Now, let me begin by disposing of one argument as plainly as I can. We are not going to release anyone if it would endanger our national security, nor will we release detainees within the United States who endanger the American people. Where demanded by justice and national security, we will seek to transfer some detainees to the same type of facilities in which we hold all manner of dangerous and violent criminals within our borders, namely highly secure prisons that ensure the public safety.

As we make these decisions, bear in mind the following fact: Nobody has ever escaped from one of our Federal super-max prisons, which hold hundreds of convicted terrorists. As Republican Senator Lindsey Graham said, "The idea that we cannot find a place to securely house 250-plus detainees within the United States is not rational."

Now, we are currently in the process of reviewing each of the detainee cases at Guantanamo to determine the appropriate policy for dealing with them. And as we do so, we are acutely aware that under the last administration, detainees were released and, in some cases, returned to the battlefield. That's why we are doing away with the poorly planned, haphazard approach that led those detainees go in the past. Instead, we are treating these cases with the care and attention that the law requires and that our security demands. Now, going forward, these cases will fall into five distinct categories.

First, whenever feasible, we will try those who have violated American criminal laws in Federal courts, courts provided for by the United States Constitution. Some have derided our Federal courts as incapable of handling the trials of terrorists. They are wrong. Our courts and our juries, our citizens, are tough enough to convict terrorists. The record makes that clear. Ramzi Yousef tried to blow up the World Trade Center. He was convicted in our courts and is serving a life sentence in U.S. prisons. Zacarias Moussaoui has been identified as the 20th 9/11 hijacker. He was convicted in our courts, and he too is serving a life sentence in prison. If we can try those terrorists in our courts and hold them in our prisons, then we can do the same with detainees from Guantanamo.

Now, recently we prosecuted and received a guilty plea from a detainee, al-Marri, in Federal court after years of legal confusion. We're preparing to transfer another detainee to the Southern District Court of New York, where he will face trial on charges related to the 1998 bombings of our Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, bombings that killed over 200 people. Preventing this detainee from coming to our shores would prevent his trial and conviction. And after over a decade, it is time to finally see that justice is served, and that is what we intend to do.

The second category of cases involves detainees who violate the laws of war and are therefore best tried through military commissions. Now, military commissions have a history in the United States dating back to George Washington and the Revolutionary War. They are an appropriate venue for trying detainees for violations of the laws of war. They allow for the protection of sensitive sources and methods of intelligence gathering; they allow for the safety and security of participants and for the presentation of evidence gathered from the battlefield that cannot always be effectively presented in Federal courts.

Now, some have suggested that this represents a reversal on my part. They should look at the record. In 2006, I did strongly oppose legislation proposed by the Bush administration and passed by the Congress because it failed to establish a legitimate legal framework with the kind of meaningful due process, rights for the accused, that could stand up on appeal.

I said at that time, however, that I supported the use of military commissions to try detainees, provided there were several reforms, and, in fact, there were some bipartisan efforts to achieve those reforms. Those are the reforms that we are now making. Instead of using the flawed commissions of the last 7 years, my administration is bringing our commissions in line with the rule of law. We will no longer permit the use of evidence—as evidence, statements that have been obtained using cruel, inhuman, or degrading interrogation methods. We will no longer place the burden to prove that hearsay is unreliable on the opponent of the hearsay. And we will give detainees greater latitude in selecting their own counsel and more protections if they refuse to testify. These reforms, among others, will make our military commissions a more credible and effective means of administering justice, and I will work with Congress and members of both parties, as well as legal authorities across the political spectrum, on legislation to ensure that these commissions are fair, legitimate, and effective.

The third category of detainees includes those who have been ordered released by the courts. Now let me repeat what I said earlier: This has nothing to do with my decision to close Guantanamo; it has to do with the rule of law. The courts have spoken. They have found that there's no legitimate reason to hold 21 of the people currently held at Guantanamo. Nineteen of these findings took place before I was sworn into office. I cannot ignore these rulings because as President, I too am bound by the law. The United States is a nation of laws, and so we must abide by these rulings.

The fourth category of cases involves detainees who we have determined can be transferred safely to another country. So far, our review team has approved 50 detainees for transfer. And my administration is in ongoing discussions with a number of other countries about the transfer of detainees to their soil for detention and rehabilitation.

Now, finally, there remains the question of detainees at Guantanamo who cannot be prosecuted yet who pose a clear danger to the American people. And I have to be honest here: This is the toughest single issue that we will face. We're going to exhaust every avenue that we have to prosecute those at Guantanamo who pose a danger to our country. But even when this process is complete, there may be a number of people who cannot be prosecuted for past crimes, in some cases because evidence may be tainted, but who, nonetheless, pose a threat to the security of the United States. Examples of that threat include people who've received extensive explosives training at Al Qaida training camps, or commanded Taliban troops in battle, or expressed their allegiance to Usama bin Laden, or otherwise made it clear that they want to kill Americans. These are people who, in effect, remain at war with the United States.

Let me repeat: I am not going to release individuals who endanger the American people. Al Qaida terrorists and their affiliates are at war with the United States, and those that we capture, like other prisoners of war, must be prevented from attacking us again. Now, having said that, we must recognize that these detention policies cannot be unbounded; they can't be based simply on what I or the executive branch decide alone. And that's why my

administration has begun to reshape the standards that apply to ensure that they are in line with the rule of law. We must have clear, defensible, and lawful standards for those who fall into this category. We must have fair procedures so that we don't make mistakes. We must have a thorough process of periodic review so that any prolonged detention is carefully evaluated and justified.

I know that creating such a system poses unique challenges. And other countries have grappled with this question; now, so must we. But I want to be very clear that our goal is to construct a legitimate legal framework for the remaining Guantanamo detainees that cannot be transferred. Our goal is not to avoid a legitimate legal framework. In our constitutional system, prolonged detention should not be the decision of any one man. If and when we determine that the United States must hold individuals to keep them from carrying out an act of war, we will do so within a system that involves judicial and congressional oversight. And so, going forward, my administration will work with Congress to develop an appropriate legal regime so that our efforts are consistent with our values and our Constitution.

Now, as our efforts to close Guantanamo move forward, I know that the politics in Congress will be difficult. These are issues that are fodder for 30-second commercials. You can almost picture the direct mail pieces that emerge from any vote on this issue, designed to frighten the population. I get it. But if we continue to make decisions within a climate of fear, we will make more mistakes. And if we refuse to deal with these issues today, then I guarantee you that they will be an albatross around our efforts to combat terrorism in the future.

I have confidence that the American people are more interested in doing what is right to protect this country than in political posturing. I am not the only person in this city who swore an oath to uphold the Constitution; so did each and every Member of Congress. And together we have a responsibility to enlist our values in the effort to secure our people and to leave behind the legacy that makes it easier for future Presidents to keep this country safe.

Now let me touch on a second set of issues that relate to security and transparency. National security requires a delicate balance. One the one hand, our democracy depends on transparency. On the other hand, some information must be protected from public disclosure for the sake of our security, for instance, the movement of our troops, our intelligence gathering, or the information we have about a terrorist organization and its affiliates. In these and other cases, lives are at stake.

Now, several weeks ago, as part of an ongoing court case, I released memos issued by the previous administration's Office of Legal Counsel. I did not do this because I disagreed with the enhanced interrogation techniques that those memos authorized, and I didn't release the documents because I rejected their legal rationales, although I do on both counts. I released the memos because the existence of that approach to interrogation was already widely known, the Bush administration had acknowledged its existence, and I had already banned those methods. The argument that somehow by releasing those memos we are providing terrorists with information about how they will be interrogated makes no sense. We will not be interrogating terrorists using that approach. That approach is now prohibited.

In short, I released these memos because there was no overriding reason to protect them. And the ensuing debate has helped the American people better understand how these interrogation methods came to be authorized and used.

On the other hand, I recently opposed the release of certain photographs that were taken of detainees by U.S. personnel between 2002 and 2004. Individuals who violated standards of behavior in these photos have been investigated, and they have been held accountable. There was and is no debate as to whether what is reflected in those photos is wrong. Nothing has been concealed to absolve perpetrators of crimes. However, it was my judgment, informed by my national security team, that releasing these photos would inflame anti-American opinion and allow our enemies to paint U.S. troops with a broad, damning, and inaccurate

brush, thereby endangering them in theaters of war.

In short, there is a clear and compelling reason to not release these particular photos. There are nearly 200,000 Americans who are serving in harm's way, and I have a solemn responsibility for their safety as Commander in Chief. Nothing would be gained by the release of these photos that matters more than the lives of our young men and women serving in harm's way.

Now, in the press's mind and in some of the public's mind, these two cases are contradictory. They are not to me. In each of these cases, I had to strike the right balance between transparency and national security. And this balance brings with it a precious responsibility. There's no doubt that the American people have seen this balance tested over the last several years. In the images from Abu Ghraib and the brutal interrogation techniques made public long before I was President, the American people learned of actions taken in their name that bear no resemblance to the ideals that generations of Americans have fought for. And whether it was the runup to the Iraq war or the revelation of secret programs, Americans often felt like part of the story had been unnecessarily withheld from them. And that caused suspicion to build up, and that leads to a thirst for accountability.

I understand that. I ran for President promising transparency, and I meant what I said. And that's why, whenever possible, my administration will make all information available to the American people, so that they can make informed judgments and hold us accountable. But I have never argued, and I never will, that our most sensitive national security matters should simply be an open book. I will never abandon and will vigorously defend the necessity of classification to defend our troops at war, to protect sources and methods, and to safeguard confidential actions that keep the American people safe. Here's the difference, though: Whenever we cannot release certain information to the public for valid national security reasons, I will insist that there is oversight of my actions by Congress or by the courts.

We're currently launching a review of current policies by all those agencies responsible for the classification of documents to determine where reforms are possible and to assure that the other branches of Government will be in a position to review executive branch decisions on these matters, because in our systems of checks and balances, someone must always watch over the watchers, especially when it comes to sensitive administration—information.

Now, along these same lines, my administration is also confronting challenges to what is known as the state secrets privilege. This is a doctrine that allows the Government to challenge legal cases involving secret programs. It's been used by many past Presidents—Republican and Democrat—for many decades. And while this principle is absolutely necessary in some circumstances to protect national security, I am concerned that it has been overused. It is also currently the subject of a wide range of lawsuits. So let me lay out some principles here. We must not protect information merely because it reveals the violation of a law or embarrassment to the Government. And that's why my administration is nearing completion of a thorough review of this practice.

And we plan to embrace several principles for reform. We will apply a stricter legal test to material that can be protected under the state secrets privilege. We will not assert the privilege in court without first following our own formal process, including review by a Justice Department committee and the personal approval of the Attorney General. And each year, we will voluntarily report to Congress when we have invoked the privilege and why, because, as I said before, there must be proper oversight over our actions.

On all these matters related to the disclosure of sensitive information, I wish I could say that there was some simple formula out there to be had. There is not. These often involve tough calls, involve competing concerns, and they require a surgical approach. But the common thread that runs through all of my decisions is simple. We will safeguard what we must to protect the American people, but we will also ensure the

accountability and oversight that is the hallmark of our constitutional system. I will never hide the truth because it's uncomfortable. I will deal with Congress and the courts as coequal branches of Government. I will tell the American people what I know and don't know, and when I release something publicly or keep something secret, I will tell you why.

Now, in all the areas that I've discussed today, the policies that I've proposed represent a new direction from the last 8 years. To protect the American people and our values, we've banned enhanced interrogation techniques. We are closing the prison at Guantanamo. We are reforming military commissions, and we will pursue a new legal regime to detain terrorists. We are declassifying more information and embracing more oversight of our actions, and we're narrowing our use of the state secrets privilege. These are dramatic changes that will put our approach to national security on a surer, safer, and more sustainable footing. Their implementation will take time, but they will get done.

There's a core principle that we will apply to all of our actions. Even as we clean up the mess at Guantanamo, we will constantly reevaluate our approach, subject our decisions to review from other branches of Government as well as the public. We seek the strongest and most sustainable legal framework for addressing these issues in the long term, not to serve immediate politics, but to do what's right over the long term. By doing that, we can leave behind a legacy that outlasts my administration, my Presidency, that endures for the next President and the President after that, a legacy that protects the American people and enjoys a broad legitimacy at home and abroad.

Now, this is what I mean when I say that we need to focus on the future. I recognize that many still have a strong desire to focus on the past. When it comes to actions of the last 8 years, passions are high. Some Americans are angry; others want to refight debates that have been settled, in some cases, debates that they have lost. And I know that these debates lead directly, in some cases, to a call for a fuller accounting, perhaps through an independent commission.

Now, I've opposed the creation of such a commission because I believe that our existing democratic institutions are strong enough to deliver accountability. The Congress can review abuses of our values, and there are ongoing inquiries by the Congress into matters like enhanced interrogation techniques. The Department of Justice and our courts can work through and punish any violations of our laws or miscarriages of justice.

It's no secret there is a tendency in Washington to spend our time pointing fingers at one another. And it's no secret that our media culture feeds the impulse that leads to a good fight and good copy. But nothing will contribute more than that than a extended relitigation of the last 8 years. Already, we've seen how that kind of effort only leads those in Washington to different sides, to laying blame. It can distract us from focusing our time, our efforts, and our politics on the challenges of the future.

We see that, above all, in the recent debate—how the recent debate has obscured the truth and sent people into opposite and absolutist ends. On the one side of the spectrum, there are those who make little allowance for the unique challenges posed by terrorism and would almost never put national security over transparency. And on the other end of the spectrum, there are those who embrace a view that can be summarized in two words: "Anything goes." Their arguments suggest that the ends of fighting terrorism can be used to justify any means, and that the President should have blanket authority to do whatever he wants, provided it is a President with whom they agree.

Now, both sides may be sincere in their views, but neither side is right. The American people are not absolutist, and they don't elect us to impose a rigid ideology on our problems. They know that we need not sacrifice our security for our values, nor sacrifice our values for our security, so long as we approach difficult questions with honesty and care and a dose of common sense. That, after all, is the unique genius of America. That's the challenge laid down by our Constitution. That has been the source of our strength through the ages. That's what makes the United States of America different as a nation.

I can stand here today, as President of the United States, and say without exception or equivocation that we do not torture, and that we will vigorously protect our people while forging a strong and durable framework that allows us to fight terrorism while abiding by the rule of law. Make no mistake: If we fail to turn the page on the approach that was taken over the past several years, then I will not be able to say that as President. And if we cannot stand for our core values, then we are not keeping faith with the documents that are enshrined in this hall.

The Framers who drafted the Constitution could not have foreseen the challenges that have unfolded over the last 222 years. But our Constitution has endured through secession and civil rights, through world war and cold war, because it provides a foundation of principles that can be applied pragmatically; it provides a compass that can help us find our way. It hasn't always been easy. We are an imperfect people. Every now and then, there are those who think that America's safety and success requires us to walk away from the sacred principles enshrined in this building. And we hear such voices today. But over the long haul, the American people have resisted that temptation. And though we've made our share of mistakes, required some course corrections, ultimately, we have held fast to the principles that have been the source of our strength and a beacon to the world.

Now this generation faces a great test in the specter of terrorism. And unlike the Civil War or World War II, we can't count on a surrender ceremony to bring this journey to an end. Right now, in distant training camps and in crowded cities, there are people plotting to take American lives. That will be the case a year from now, 5 years from now, and in all probability, 10 years from now. Neither I nor anyone can stand here today and say that there will not be another terrorist attack that takes American lives. But I can say with certainty that my administration, along with our extraordinary troops and the patriotic men and women who defend our national security, will do everything in our power to keep the American people safe. And I do know with certainty that we can and will defeat Al Qaida. Because the terrorists can only succeed if they swell their ranks and alienate America from our allies, and they will never be able to do that if we stay true to who we are, if we forge tough and durable approaches to fighting terrorism that are anchored in our timeless ideals. This must be our common purpose.

I ran for President because I believe that we cannot solve the challenges of our time unless we solve them together. We will not be safe if we see national security as a wedge that divides America. It can and must be a cause that unites us as one people and as one nation. We've done so before in times that were more perilous than ours; we will do so once again.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:28 a.m. in the Rotunda. In his remarks, he referred to former Secretary of State Colin L. Powell; and Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization.

Remarks Honoring the 2009 Super Bowl Champion Pittsburgh Steelers
May 21, 2009

Hello, everybody. I first of all want to just acknowledge a few people that are here. First of all, some of my Cabinet members: Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack, who grew up as a maniacal Pittsburgh Steeler fan, he is here; Secretary of the Veterans Administration, Eric Shinseki, a war hero and somebody that is doing an outstanding job on behalf of our veterans; we have the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral Mullen—Mike Mullen, as well as his lovely wife are here. Please give them a big round of applause. We've got some Pennsylvania folks around here: Senator Bob Casey; Senator Arlen Specter; Teresa Heinz Kerry;

Representatives Tim Murphy, Mike Doyle, Glenn Thompson, Tom Rooney, and Charlie Wilson. Give them all a big round of applause.

Welcome to the White House, everybody. Before we begin, I want to offer a special welcome to the wounded warriors who have joined us today from Walter Reed and from the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda. Thank you for your service.

And welcome back Dan Rooney and the entire Rooney family. For nearly five decades, Dan has been a tremendous ambassador for pro football and for the city of Pittsburgh. And in the years to come, all Americans will be fortunate to have his service as our United States Ambassador to Ireland.

Just a personal note: I had occasion of meeting a lot of people during the course of my campaign for the Presidency. I can tell you that I don't know anybody who is more of a gentleman, who is more loyal, who is more committed to excellence than Mr. Rooney. And he and his family have just been such an extraordinary pillar for the city of Pittsburgh. I'd like everybody to give them a big round of applause one more time. And he's humble. [*Laughter*] This kind of attention embarrasses him, but he has no choice.

Congratulations to the Super Bowl champion Pittsburgh Steelers for the NFL-record, sixth Lombardi Trophy. Some are calling it "Sixburgh" these days. [*Laughter*] Congratulations to all the fans of the Steeler Nation, who wave that Terrible Towel every Sunday.

Now, I already told these guys, no matter how big they are, I am a Bears fan. [*Laughter*] But it's no secret that I was pulling for the Steelers during the Super Bowl last year, and that's part of the reason why this is so much fun for me. This isn't me trying to have it both ways. Everybody knows I'm pretty serious about my sports teams, but growing up in Hawaii when I was a kid, we didn't have a local football team. And when I started playing, and I started paying attention to football, it was guys like Terry Bradshaw and Franco Harris and the Steel Curtain and Mean Joe Greene, who is here. Where's Mean Joe? There he is, right there. Those were the guys that were playing, and so I became a Steelers fan.

And last March, I actually got to hang out with Franco and "The Bus," Jerome Bettis, at an event in Pittsburgh. And Jerome even joined me when we went to meet some steelworkers on a shift change. And I got my own Terrible Towel.

But this is a new team for a new era. And that's embodied by Coach Tomlin, who's here with his lovely wife. And I want everybody to give Coach Tomlin a huge round of applause. He didn't just win the Super Bowl; he also happened to be NFL Coach of the Year, the youngest coach ever to win a Super Bowl.

And then there's the new Steel Curtain, the NFL's best defense last year, thanks to Dick LeBeau, who I think everybody acknowledges is one of the greatest defensive coordinators of all time—so where's Dick? There he is over there.

We've got the team captains up here: Big Ben Roethlisberger—give him—come on, give Big Ben a round of applause here; James Farrior, a Pro Bowler who made 133 tackles this season; Jeff Reed, who was clutch in the Super Bowl; Hines Ward, who was the Super Bowl MVP 4 years ago, who's always the happiest man in football. Hines is always happy.

And we've got this year's Super Bowl MVP, Santonio Holmes, who made one of the greatest touchdown catches I've ever seen. That means two of the last four Super Bowl MVPs hail from the Pittsburgh wide-receiving corps.

Now, I pointed out that that was a heck of a pass that Ben threw. But then one of the linemen pointed out that was some blocking on that play. [*Laughter*] So that just reminds you, that's what Steeler football is all about, it's a team effort. And this is a team that entered the season facing the most difficult schedule in the league. But guys like these thrive on that. They plowed through the regular season; they won every game in the AFC North; they took down the Chargers and the Ravens in the playoffs.

And I can't remember a more exciting Super Bowl. Arizona took the lead with 3 minutes left; Pittsburgh comes back with just 2 with that winning touchdown. Santonio had 73 of those yards on that drive, including the incredible game-winning, touchdown catch. And now they're champs. So obviously, these are guys who take

their responsibilities on the football field seriously. But they take them just as seriously off the field. They're generous with their time for charity and for their communities. So that explains why we're doing something a little bit different here today than when sports champions usually come to visit the White House. These guys have agreed to stick around for a while, and we're going to team them up, not to run some plays, but to serve others.

I often say that the beauty of serving others is that anyone can do it. You don't have to be President, and you don't have to be a pro football player. All you need to do is to have a desire to make a difference, to give back to your community, and to contribute to your nation. And that's what we're going to do right here. We're going to work with the USO to put together 3,000 care packages for our troops serving in harm's way.

We're going to give back to those who've given so much for us. And I find that fitting and proper, a good way to kick off a weekend that serves to honor all the men and women who have worn the proud uniform of this country that we love.

So congratulations, again, Steelers, for a extraordinary season. Good luck next year, and thank you again for your willingness to go above and beyond and not just come here for a photo op, but to join the men and women who protect this country to make sure that we are safe.

Thank you very much, everybody. God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:49 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Deborah Mullen, wife of Adm. Michael G. Mullen, USN, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff; Teresa Heinz Kerry, chairman, Heinz Family Philanthropies and Heinz Endowments; Rep. Thomas J. Rooney; Rep. Glenn Thompson; Daniel M. Rooney, U.S. Ambassador-designate to Ireland and chairman, Pittsburgh Steelers; Terry Bradshaw, former quarterback, Franco Harris, former running back, Joe Greene, former defensive tackle, Jerome Bettis, former running back, Ben Roethlisberger, quarterback, James Farrior, linebacker, Jeff Reed, placekicker, Hines Ward, wide receiver, and Santonio Holmes, wide receiver, Pittsburg Steelers; and Kiya Winston Tomlin, wife of Coach Mike P. Tomlin of the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Statement on Energy and Commerce Committee Action on Energy and Climate Legislation

May 21, 2009

I commend Chairman Waxman and the members of the Energy and Commerce Committee for a successful effort to pass a comprehensive energy and climate bill out of their committee today. We are now one step closer to delivering on the promise of a new, clean energy economy that will make America less dependent on foreign oil, crack down on polluters, and create millions of new jobs all across America. The bill is historic for what it achieves, providing clean energy incentives that encourage innovation while recognizing the concerns of sensitive industries and regions in this country. And this achievement is all the more historic for bringing together many who have in the past opposed a common effort, from labor unions to corporate CEOs, and environmentalists to energy companies. I applaud the committee for its action and look forward to signing comprehensive legislation.

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Proposed Agreement for Cooperation Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the United Arab Emirates Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy

May 21, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

I am pleased to transmit to the Congress, pursuant to sections 123 b. and 123 d. of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, as amended (42 U.S.C. 2153(b), (d)) (the "Act"), the text of a proposed Agreement for Cooperation Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the United Arab Emirates Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy. I am also pleased to transmit my written approval, authorization, and determination concerning the Agreement, and an unclassified Nuclear Proliferation Assessment Statement (NPAS) concerning the Agreement. (In accordance with section 123 of the Act, as amended by Title XII of the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 (Public Law 105–277), a classified annex to the NPAS, prepared by the Secretary of State in consultation with the Director of National Intelligence, summarizing relevant classified information, will be submitted to the Congress separately.) The joint memorandum submitted to me by the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Energy and a letter from the Chairman of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission stating the views of the Commission are also enclosed.

The proposed Agreement has been negotiated in accordance with the Act and other applicable law. In my judgment, it meets all applicable statutory requirements and will advance the nonproliferation and other foreign policy interests of the United States.

The Agreement provides a comprehensive framework for peaceful nuclear cooperation with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) based on a mutual commitment to nuclear nonproliferation. The United States and the UAE are entering into it in the context of a stated intention by the UAE to rely on existing international markets for nuclear fuel services as an alternative to the pursuit of enrichment and reprocessing. Article 7 will transform this UAE policy into a legally binding obligation from the UAE to the United States upon entry into force of the Agreement. Article 13 provides, *inter alia*, that if the UAE at any time following entry into force of the Agreement materially violates Article 7, the United States will have a right to cease further cooperation under the Agreement, require the return of items subject to the Agreement, and terminate the Agreement by giving 90 days written notice. In view of these and other nonproliferation features, the Agreement has the potential to serve as a model for other countries in the region that wish to pursue responsible nuclear energy development.

The Agreement has a term of 30 years and permits the transfer of technology, material, equipment (including reactors), and components for nuclear research and nuclear power production. It does not permit transfers of Restricted Data, sensitive nuclear technology, sensitive nuclear facilities, or major critical components of such facilities. In the event of termination of the Agreement, key nonproliferation conditions and controls continue with respect to material, equipment, and components subject to the Agreement.

In addition to the UAE's obligation to forgo enrichment and reprocessing—the first instance of such an obligation on the part of a U.S. cooperating partner in an agreement of this type—the Agreement contains certain additional nonproliferation features not typically found in such agreements. These are modeled on similar provisions in the 1981 U.S.-Egypt Agreement for Peaceful Nuclear Cooperation and include (a) a right of the United States to require the removal of special fissionable material subject to the Agreement from the UAE either to the United States or to a third country if exceptional circumstances of concern from a nonproliferation standpoint so require, and (b) confirmation by the United States that the

fields of cooperation, terms, and conditions accorded by the United States to the UAE shall be no less favorable in scope and effect than those that the United States may accord to any other non-nuclear-weapon State in the Middle East in a peaceful nuclear cooperation agreement. The Agreement also provides, for the first time in a U.S. agreement for peaceful nuclear cooperation, that prior to U.S. licensing of exports of nuclear material, equipment, components, or technology pursuant to the Agreement, the UAE shall bring into force the Additional Protocol to its safeguards agreement.

The UAE is a non-nuclear-weapon State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). The United States is a nuclear-weapon State party to the NPT. Article 12 of the proposed Agreement provides that the Agreement shall not be interpreted as affecting the inalienable rights of the United States and the UAE under the NPT. A more detailed discussion of the UAE's intended civil nuclear program and its nonproliferation policies and practices is provided in the NPAS and in a classified Annex to the NPAS to be submitted to the Congress separately.

The Agreed Minute to the Agreement provides U.S. prior approval for retransfers by the UAE of irradiated nuclear material subject to the Agreement to France and the United Kingdom, if consistent with their respective policies, laws, and regulations, for storage or reprocessing subject to specified conditions, including that prior agreement between the United States and the UAE is required for the transfer of any special fissionable material recovered from any such reprocessing to the UAE. The transferred material would also have to be held within the European Atomic Energy Community subject to the Agreement for Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy Between the United States of America and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM).

In view of the fact that this consent would constitute a subsequent arrangement under the Act if agreed separately from the proposed Agreement, the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Energy have ensured that the advance approval provisions meet the applicable requirements of section 131 of the Act. Specifically, they have concluded that the U.S. advance approval for retransfer of nuclear material for reprocessing or storage contained in the Agreed Minute to the proposed Agreement is not inimical to the common defense and security. An analysis of the advance approval given in the Agreed Minute is contained in the NPAS.

This transmission shall constitute a submittal for purposes of both sections 123 b. and 123 d. of the Act. My Administration is prepared to begin immediately the consultations with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee as provided in section 123 b. Upon completion of the period of 30 days of continuous session provided for in section 123 b., the period of 60 days of continuous session provided for in section 123 d. shall commence

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
May 21, 2009.

Remarks on Signing the Weapons System Acquisition Reforms Act of 2009
May 22, 2009

Good morning, everybody. Please have a seat. Well, long before I took office, I argued that meeting our greatest challenges would require not only changing policies in Washington, but changing the way we do business in Washington. It would require reforming a culture where the influence of lobbyists too often trumps the will of the people, rethinking government so that it works as effectively and efficiently as possible, and renewing our sense of common purpose so that we can bring people together in common effort.

That's exactly what we've done this week. On Tuesday, we brought auto executives, labor unions, environmental groups, Democrats, and Republicans together to set a national fuel

efficiency standard for our cars and trucks for the first time in history. On Wednesday, I signed bipartisan legislation to help homeowners and to crack down on the predatory lenders who seek to take advantage of them. And later this afternoon, I'll sign bipartisan legislation that protects consumers from the unfair rate hikes and abusive fees levied by many credit card companies.

And this morning, I'm proud to join Democratic and Republican Members of Congress for the signing of a bill that will eliminate some of the waste and inefficiency in our defense projects, reforms that will better protect our Nation, better protect our troops, and save taxpayers tens of billions of dollars.

Now, let me be clear: As Commander in Chief, I will do whatever it takes to defend the American people, which is why I've increased funding for the best military in the history of the world. We'll continue to make new investments in 21st century capabilities to meet new challenges. And we will always give our men and women in uniform the equipment and the support that they need to get the job done.

But I reject the notion that we have to waste billions of taxpayer dollars to keep this Nation secure. When it comes to purchasing weapons systems and developing defense projects, the choice we face is between investments that are designed to keep the American people safe and those that are simply designed to make a defense company or a contractor rich.

Last year, the Government Accountability Office, or the GAO, looked into 95 major defense projects and found cost overruns that totaled $295 billion. Wasteful spending comes from exotic requirements, lack of oversight, and indefensible no-bid contracts that don't make our troops or our country any safer. To put this in perspective, these cost overruns would have paid our troops' salaries and provided benefits for their families for more than a year.

At a time when we're fighting two wars and facing a serious deficit, this is unexcusable and unconscionable. As Secretary Gates has said, "One dollar of waste in our defense budget is a dollar we can't spend to support our troops, or prepare for future threats, or protect the American people." Well, it's finally time to end this waste and inefficiency.

Already, I've announced reform that will greatly reduce no-bid defense contracts and save the Government billions of dollars. And Secretary Gates, working with our military leadership, has also proposed a courageous set of reforms in our defense budget that will target waste and strengthen our military for the future. In taking on this enormously difficult task, he's done a tremendous job, and I want to publicly commend Secretary Gates for that.

The bill I'm signing today, known as the Weapons System Acquisition Reforms Act, represents an important next step in this procurement reform process. It reforms a system where taxpayers are charged too much for weapons systems that too often arrive late, a system that suffers from spending on unproven technologies, outdated weapons, and a general lack of oversight.

And the purpose of this law will be to limit cost overruns before they spiral out of control. It will strengthen oversight and accountability by appointing officials who will be charged with closely monitoring the weapons systems we're purchasing to ensure that costs are controlled. If the costs of certain defense projects continue to grow year after year, those projects will be closely reviewed, and if they don't provide the value we need, they will be terminated. This law will also enhance competition and end conflicts of interest in the weapons acquisitions process so that American taxpayers and the American military can get the best weapons at the lowest cost.

And this legislation is long overdue, and it's been a long time coming. But we're finally signing it into law because of the dedication and commitment of a few key Members of Congress who've been fighting for years for this reform: Senators Carl Levin and John McCain; Representatives Ike Skelton, John McHugh, Rob Andrews, and Mike Conaway. I'm very proud of the extraordinary work that all these gentlemen have done who are standing behind me today. Senator McCain couldn't be here today because he's making sure he has a good seat to watch his son graduate from the Naval Academy in a few

hours, and that's where I'm headed as soon as I catch my ride over here.

But I will tell you that defense procurement reform was one of the issues that John McCain and I discussed in our first meeting after the election. And we pledged to work together to get it done, and today I'm extraordinarily proud to stand here and sign a bill that passed with unanimous support from both parties at every step of the way.

What all the gentlemen standing behind me, as well as Senator McCain, knows, what Secretary Gates knows, what all Members of Congress who have worked on this legislation understand, is that we have no greater responsibility than to ensure that our men and women in uniform have everything they need to do their jobs. And every penny we waste on this effort because of no-bid contracts or cost overruns is not only an affront to American taxpayers, it's an affront to our military. And while we have a long way to go to end this waste once and for all, the legislation I'm about to sign is a very important step in creating a Government that is more efficient, more accountable, and more responsible in keeping the public's trust.

So once again, I want to thank all these Members of Congress who did extraordinary work, not only to pass the bill but to get it here on time. I'm proud of them. I'm proud of Congress for sending me this legislation. That's why I'm going to go sign it right now. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:06 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to John Sidney "Jack" McCain IV, son of Sen. John McCain. S. 454, approved May 22, was assigned Public Law No. 111–23.

Commencement Address at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland

May 22, 2009

Thank you. Thank you very much. Please, be seated. Governor O'Malley, thank you for your generous introduction and for your leadership here in Maryland; Vice Admiral Fowler and faculty; distinguished guests, parents, family, and friends; the Brigade of Midshipmen; and most importantly, the graduates of the class of 2009, 756 Navy and, I am told, the largest number of marines in Naval Academy history.

Now, I know it's customary at graduation for guests to bring a gift, and I have. All midshipmen on restriction for minor conduct offenses are hereby officially absolved. I did say "minor." [*Laughter*]

Midshipmen, I'm told that the extra ribbon on your chest is for the honor you earned, for only the second time in the storied history of the Naval Academy, the Navy's Meritorious Unit Commendation Award. So I've consulted with Admiral Fowler, and I can make this announcement: For all you midshipmen returning next fall, I hereby grant you something extra, an extra weekend. [*Applause*] I should stop now. [*Laughter*]

I am extraordinarily honored to be with you today, because of all the privileges of serving as President, I have no greater honor than serving as your Commander in Chief.

Every day I count on Naval Academy graduates like Admiral Mike Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; the CNO, Admiral Gary Roughead; and my Director of National Intelligence, Admiral Dennis Blair. I'll also be counting on Ray Mabus, the—a former surface warfare officer, as our new Secretary of the Navy.

Every day, I rely on former sailors and marines on my staff, young men who serve as intelligence officers in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the 32d Commandant of the Marine Corps, Supreme Allied Commander, and now my National Security Adviser, General Jim Jones.

I've admired your prowess on the football field. At the White House last month, I was proud to present the team and Coach Ken

with the Commander in Chief Trophy, which you won for the sixth straight time. And I know you beat Army seven straight times. [*Laughter*]

But most of all, most of all I've admired the spirit of your service, because it's not the strength of our arms or the power of our technology that gives the United States our military dominance, it's our people. It's our sailors and marines, soldiers and airmen and coast guardsmen who perform brilliantly in every mission we give them.

Class of 2009, today is your day. It's your day to reflect on all you've achieved, or should I say, all that you endured: the madness of "I Day" that began your transformation from civilians to sailors and marines; that endless plebe summer when you were pushed to new levels, new heights, physically, mentally, morally. And speaking of new heights, I'm told that one of your proudest achievements still stands, one of the fastest times for the Herndon climb. Congratulations on that.

And families, today is your day too. It's the latest in a line of proud firsts: the first time you saw your son or daughter with that Navy haircut, that first time you saw them in their summer whites, and today the first time you'll see them as officers. So to all of you moms and dads, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, grandmas and grandpas, all the local sponsor families who opened your homes to these midshipmen, thank you for your support and for your patriotism. We are grateful.

This class is about to become the latest link in a long, unbroken chain of heroism and victory, a chain forged in battles whose names are etched in the stone of this stadium: from Coral Sea to Midway to Guadalcanal; from Iwo Jima to Inchon; from the Mekong Delta to Desert Storm. For some among us, these are not just places on a map. They're the stories of their lives. And we honor all of our veterans here today.

This chain of service calls to mind words that were spoken here in Annapolis on another spring day a century ago. The crowds assembled, the bands played, the cannons roared. As John Paul Jones's body was carried to the Yard, President Teddy Roosevelt spoke to the midshipmen gathered there that day. "Remember," he said, "our words of admiration are but as sounding brass and tinkling symbols if we do not . . . prepare to emulate their deeds."

Emulate their deeds. That is what you are called upon to do. And in doing so these past 4 years, you've not only given meaning to your own lives, you serve as a reminder and a challenge to your fellow Americans to fulfill the true meaning of citizenship.

America, look at these young men and women. Look at these sailors and marines. Here are the values that we cherish. Here are the ideals that endure. In an era when too few citizens answer the call to service, to community or to country, these Americans choose to serve. They did so in a time of war, knowing they might be called upon to make the ultimate sacrifice.

Indeed, as we near Memorial Day, we pay tribute to all those who have given their lives so that we might live free, including those aboard that Navy helicopter who were lost this week in the waters off California. We send our prayers to their families and to all who loved them.

In a culture where so many chase the outward markers of success that can so often lead us astray—the titles and status, the materialism and money, the fame and popularity—these Americans have embraced the virtues that we need most right now: self-discipline over self-interest, work over comfort, and character over celebrity.

After an era when so many institutions and individuals acted with such greed and recklessness, it's no wonder that our military remains the most trusted institution in our Nation. And in a world when so many forces and voices seek to divide us, it inspires us that this class came together and succeeded together, from every State and every corner of the world. By building an institution that's more diverse than ever—more women, more Hispanics, more African Americans—the Naval Academy has reaffirmed a fundamental American truth: that out of many, we are one.

We see these values in every one of these sailors and marines, including those who've already served their country, the dozens among you with prior enlisted service. It's the perseverance of Elvin Vasquez, a marine supply chief in Iraq who finally got into the Naval Academy on his third try, who never gave up

trying, because he says, "there's just something about being a marine." It's the example of Carlos Carballo who left the tough streets of L.A. to serve on a destroyer in the Pacific and who has used his time here to mentor others, because he's the oldest midshipman—the old man—at the age of 26. It's the patriotism of Sade Holder who came to America as a child from Trinidad, enlisted in the Navy, and then earned the titles she values most: "U.S. citizen" and "Navy midshipman" and today, "ensign." And it's the reverence for tradition shown by James P. Heg, a communications maintenance marine in Iraq who today is joined by the man who first urged him to sign up, his grandfather, returning six decades after he was a midshipman, a submariner from World War II, 89-year-old Captain James E. Heg.

Honor, courage, commitment, these are the values that have defined your years in the Yard and that you'll need in the years ahead as you join the fleet, and as you join and lead the Marines, as you confront the ever-changing threats of an ever-changing world. For history teaches us that the nations that grow comfortable with the old ways and complacent in the face of new threats, those nations do not long endure. And in the 21st century, we do not have the luxury of deciding which challenges to prepare for and which to ignore. We must overcome the full spectrum of threats, the conventional and the unconventional; the nation-state and the terrorist network; the spread of deadly technologies and the spread of hateful ideologies; 18th century-style piracy and 21st century cyber threats.

So SEALs and special operations forces, we need you for those short-notice missions in the dark of night. But we'll also need you for the long-term training of foreign militaries, so they can take responsibility for their own security. Marines, we need you to defeat the insurgent and the extremist. But we also need you to work with the tribal sheikh and local leaders from Anbar to Kandahar who want to build a better future for their people. Naval aviators and flight officers, we need you to dominate the airspace in times of conflict, but also to deliver food and medicine in times of humanitarian crisis. And surface warfare officers and submariners, we need you to project American power across the vast oceans, but also to protect American principles and values when you pull into that foreign port, because for so many people around the world, you are the face of America.

These great opportunities come with great responsibilities. Indeed, midshipmen and Presidents swear a similar oath, not only to protect and defend the American people, but the Constitution of the United States.

Yesterday, I visited the National Archives and the halls that holds our Constitution, our Declaration of Independence, and our Bill of Rights. I went there because, as our national debate on how to deal with the security challenge that we face proceeds, we must remember this enduring truth: The values and ideals in those documents are not simply words written into aging parchment, they are the bedrock of our liberty and our security. We uphold our fundamental principles and values not just because we choose to, but because we swear to, not because they feel good, but because they help keep us safe and keep us true to who we are.

Because when America strays from our values, it not only undermines the rule of law, it alienates us from our allies, it energizes our adversaries, and it endangers our national security and the lives of our troops. So as Americans, we reject the false choice between our security and our ideals. We can and we must and we will protect both. And that is just what you will pledge to do in a few moments when you raise your right hand and take your oath.

But that simple act—by that simple act, you will accept a life of great sacrifice, long deployments, separation from loved ones, tests and trials that most Americans can't imagine. But that is the oath you take, the life you choose, the promise you make to America.

And today, this is the promise I make to you. It's a promise that as long as I am your Commander in Chief, I will only send you into harm's way when it is absolutely necessary, and with the strategy and the well-defined goals, the equipment and the support that you need to get the job done. This includes the job

of bringing the Iraq war to a responsible end and pursuing a new comprehensive strategy to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaida and its allies in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

And to get you the support you need, we're enlisting all elements of our national power—our diplomacy and development, our economic might and our moral suasion—so that you and the rest of our military do not bear the burden of our security alone. We'll also ensure you can meet the missions of today, which is why we've halted reductions in Navy personnel and increased the size of the Marine Corps. And we will ensure you can meet the missions of tomorrow, which is why we're investing in the capabilities and technologies of tomorrow—the littoral combat ships, the most advanced submarines and fighter aircraft—so that you have what you need to succeed. In short, we will maintain America's military dominance and keep you the finest fighting force the world has ever seen.

Now, as you advance through the ranks and start families of your own, know that we will be with you every step of the way, increasing your pay, increasing childcare, and helping families deal with the stress and separation of war, because as my wife Michelle has come to see in her visits with military families across the country, when a loved one is deployed, the whole family goes to war.

And, finally, whether you're 26 years old or 89, if you've worn the uniform and taken care of America, then America will take care of you with a modern VA that keeps faith with our veterans and wounded warriors, with a 21st century GI bill that gives our veterans and their families the chance to live out their dreams. This is America's covenant with you, a solemn commitment to all those who serve. And while our Nation has not always fulfilled its duties to its Armed Forces, let there be no doubt, America's men and women in uniform have always fulfilled theirs.

And that's exactly what America's Navy did just last month in the seas off Somalia. I will not recount the full story of those 5 days in April; much of it is already known; some of it will never be known, and that's how it should be. But here, on this day, at this institution, it must be said: The extraordinary precision and professionalism displayed that day was made possible, in no small measure, by the training, the discipline, and the leadership skills that so many of those officers learned at the United States Naval Academy.

And after that operation, after Captain Phillips was freed, I spoke to one of the Navy SEALs who was there and with the skipper of the USS *Bainbridge*, Commander Frank Castellano, Naval Academy class of 1990. And I can tell you, as they would, that the success of that day belongs not only to a single commander or a small team of SEALs, it belongs to the many.

It belongs to all the sailors, officers and enlisted, not on one ship, but several, who diligently stood their watch. It belongs to the pilots and airmen who gave cover overhead, to the intelligence specialists and negotiators and translators, to all the people who worked day after night on the scene and in command centers half a world away to save one man they knew only as a fellow American.

And we recall that in those moments of danger and decision, these Americans did what they were trained to do. They remembered their skills. They did their duty. They performed their job. They stood their watch. They took their time and then they took their shot. And they brought that captain home.

And as Commander Castellano said later of his sailors, "Every citizen in the country should be happy and thankful that they're there." And I told him that we are.

So, class of 2009, months or years or decades from now, should you find yourself in a moment of danger, a moment of decision, should you wonder, "What is expected of me? "What should I do?" Just look at that ring on your finger. Remember your days on the bank of the Severn. Remember all you achieved here and all that you learned here: "Devotion to Honor, Strength from Courage."

Live these values, live these virtues. Emulate the deeds of those who have gone before you. Do this and you will not only distinguish yourselves as sailors and marines, you will be in the lead as we write the next proud chapter in the story of this country that we love.

Congratulations, class of 2009. God bless the Navy. God bless the Marine Corps. And God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:18 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Vice Adm. Jeffrey L. Fowler, USN, Superintendent, U.S. Naval Academy; Ken Niumatalolo, head coach, U.S. Naval Academy football team; and Richard Phillips, captain, MV *Maersk Alabama*, who was rescued from pirates off the coast of Somalia on April 12.

Remarks on Signing the Credit Card Accountability, Responsibility, and Disclosure Act of 2009
May 22, 2009

Hello, everybody. Please, have a seat—I'm sorry. It is a great pleasure to have all of you here at the White House on this gorgeous, sunny day. The sun is shining, the birds are singing; change is in the air. [*Laughter*]

This has been a historic week, a week in which we've cast aside some old divisions and put in place new reforms that will reduce our dependence on foreign oil, prevent fraud against homeowners, and save taxpayers money by preventing wasteful Government contracts, a week that marks significant progress in the difficult work of changing our policies and transforming our politics.

But the real test of change, ultimately, is whether it makes a difference in the lives of the American people. That's what matters to me. That's what matters to my administration. That's what matters to the extraordinary collection of Members of Congress that are standing with me here, but also who are in the audience. And we're here today because of a bill that will make a big difference, the Credit Card Accountability, Responsibility, and Disclosure Act.

I want to thank all the Members of Congress who were involved in this historic legislation, but I want to give a special shout-out to Chris Dodd, who has been a relentless fighter to get this done. Chris wouldn't give up until he got this legislation passed. He's spent an entire career fighting against special interests and fighting for ordinary people, and this is just the latest example.

I want to thank his partner in crime, Senator Richard Shelby; on the House side, Representatives Barney Frank, Carolyn Maloney, and Luis Gutierrez, for their outstanding work. And I want to also thank all the consumer advocates who are here today who fought long and hard for these kinds of reforms.

You know, most Americans use credit cards all the time. In the majority of cases, this is a convenience or a temporary, occasional crutch, a means to make life a little easier, to make the rare, large, or unexpected purchase that's paid off as quickly as possible.

We've also seen credit cards become for a minority of customers part of an uneasy, unstable dependence. Some end up in trouble because of reckless spending or wishful thinking. Some get in over their heads by not using their heads. And I want to be clear: We do not excuse or condone folks who've acted irresponsibly. We don't excuse irresponsibility.

But the reason this legislation is so important is because there are many others—many who have written me letters, or grabbed my arm along rope lines, or shared their stories while choking back tears—who have relied on credit cards not because they were avoiding responsibilities, but precisely because they wanted to meet their responsibilities and got trapped.

These are hard-working people whose hours were cut, or the factory closed, who turned to a credit card to get through a rough month, which turned into 2 or 3 or 6 months without a job. These are parents who found, to their surprise, that their health insurance didn't cover a child's expensive procedure and had to pay the hospital bill, families who saw their mortgage payments jump and used the credit card more often to make up the difference.

These are borrowers who discovered that credit card debt is all too easily a one-way street: It's easy to get in, but almost impossible to get out. It's also, by the way, a lot of small-business owners who have helped to finance their dream through credit cards and suddenly, in this economic downturn, find themselves getting hammered.

Part of this is the broader economy, but part of it is the practices of credit card companies. Contracts are drafted not to inform, but to confuse. Mysterious fees appear on statements, payment deadlines shift, terms change, interest rates rise. And suddenly, a credit card becomes less of a lifeline and more of an anchor.

That's what happened to Janet Hard of Freeland, Michigan, who's here today. Where's Janet? Right here. Janet is a nurse. Her husband is a pipefitter. They've got two boys. Janet and her husband have tried to be responsible; she's made her payments on time. But despite this, Janet's interest rate was increased to 24 percent. And that 24 percent applied not just for new purchases, but retroactively to her entire balance. And so, despite making steady payments, totaling $2,400 one year, her debt went down only by $350 that year.

And Janet's family is not alone. Over the past decade, credit card debt has increased by 25 percent in our country. Nearly half of all Americans carry a balance on their cards. Those who do, carry an average balance of more than $7,000. And as our economic situation worsened—and many defaulted on their debt as a result of a lost job, for example—a vicious cycle ensued. Borrowers couldn't pay their bills, and so lenders raised rates. As rates went up, more borrowers couldn't pay.

Millions of cardholders have seen their interest rates jump in just the past 6 months. One in five Americans carry a balance that has been charged interest rates above 20 percent—one in five.

Now, I also want to emphasize, these are costs that often hit responsible credit card users. Interest can be charged even if you pay your bill on time. Rates can be increased on outstanding balances even if you aren't late with a payment. And if you sit—if you start to pay down your balance, which is the right thing to do, a company can require you to pay down the debt with the lowest interest rate first, instead of the highest, which makes it much harder to ever get out of the red.

So we're here to put a change to all that. With this bill, we're putting in place some commonsense reforms designed to protect consumers like Janet. I want to be clear about this: Credit card companies provide a valuable service; we don't begrudge them turning a profit. We just want to make sure that they do so while upholding basic standards of fairness, transparency, and accountability. Just as we demand credit card users to act responsibly, we demand that credit card companies act responsibly too. And that's not too much to ask.

And that's why, because of this new law, statements will be required to tell credit card holders how long it will take to pay off a balance and what it will cost in interest if they only make the minimum monthly payments. We also put a stop to retroactive rate hikes that appear on a bill suddenly with no rhyme or reason.

Every card company will have to post its credit card agreements online, and we'll monitor those agreements to see if new protections are needed. Consumers will have more time to understand their statements as well. Companies will have to mail them 21 days before payment is due, not 14. And this law ends the practice of shifting payment dates. This always used to bug me, when you'd get like—suddenly, it was due on the 19th when it had been the 31st.

Lastly, among many other provisions, there will be no more sudden charges—changes to terms and conditions. We require at least 45 days notice if the credit card company is going to change terms and conditions.

So we're not going to give people a free pass, and we expect consumers to live within their means and pay what they owe. But we also expect financial institutions to act with the same sense of responsibility that the American people aspire to in their own lives.

And this is a difficult time for our country, born in many ways of our collective failure to live up to our obligations to ourselves and to one another. And the fact is, it took a long time to dig ourselves into this economic hole; it's going to take some time to dig ourselves out.

But I'm heartened by what I'm seeing, by the willingness of old adversaries to seek out new partnerships, by the progress we've made these past months to address many of our toughest challenges. And I'm confident that as a nation we will learn the lessons of our recent past and that we will elevate again those values at the heart of our success as a people: hard work over the easy buck, responsibility over recklessness, and, yes, moderation over extravagance.

This work has already begun, and now it continues. I thank the Members of Congress for putting their shoulder to the wheel in a bipartisan fashion and getting this piece of legislation done. Congratulations to all of you. The least I can do for you is to sign the thing. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, the President signed the bill.*]

All right, everybody. Thank you. Have a great weekend.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:08 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to pipefitter William Hard of Freeland, MI. H.R. 627, approved May 22, was assigned Public Law No. 111–24.

The President's Weekly Address
May 23, 2009

This Memorial Day weekend, Americans will gather on lawns and porches, fire up the grill, and enjoy the company of family, friends, and neighbors. But this is not only a time for celebration, it's also a time to reflect on what this holiday is all about, to pay tribute to our fallen heroes, and to remember the service men and women who cannot be with us this year because they are standing post far from home in Iraq, Afghanistan, and around the world.

On Friday, I traveled to Annapolis, where I spoke at the commencement of the United States Naval Academy. It was an honor to address some of America's newest sailors and marines as their Commander in Chief. Looking out at all of those young men and women, I was reminded of the extraordinary service that they are rendering to our country. And I was reminded too of all of the sacrifices that their parents, siblings, and loved ones make each day on their behalf and on our behalf.

Our fighting men and women and the military families who love them embody what's best in America. And we have a responsibility to serve all of them as well as they served us. And yet all too often in recent years and decades, we as a nation have failed to live up to that responsibility. We failed to give them the support they need or pay them the respect they deserve. That's a betrayal of the sacred trust that America has with all who wear and all who have worn the proud uniform of our country.

And that is a sacred trust I am committed to keeping as President of the United States. That's why I will send our service men and women into harm's way only when it's necessary and ensure that they have the training and equipment they need when they enter the theater of war.

That's why we are building a 21st century Department of Veterans Affairs with the largest single-year funding increase in three decades. It's a commitment that will help us provide our veterans with the support and benefits they have earned and expand quality health care to a half million more veterans.

That's why, this week, I signed a bill that will eliminate some of the waste and inefficiency in our defense projects, reform that will better protect our Nation, better protect our troops, and save taxpayers tens of billions of dollars.

And that's why we are laying a new foundation for our economy, so that when our troops return home and take off the uniform, they can find a good job, provide for their families, and earn a college degree on a post-9/11 GI bill that will offer them the same opportunity to live out their dreams that was afforded our greatest generation.

These are some of the ways we can, must, and will honor the service of our troops and the sacrifices of their families. But we must also do our part, not only as a nation, but as individuals, for those Americans who are bearing the burden of wars being fought on our behalf. That can mean sending a letter or a care package to our troops overseas. It can mean volunteering at a clinic where a wounded warrior is being treated or bringing supplies to a homeless veterans' center. Or it can mean something as simple as saying thank you to a veteran you pass on the street.

That's what Memorial Day is all about. It's about doing all we can to repay the debt we owe to those men and women who have answered our Nation's call by fighting under its flag. It's about recognizing that we, as a people, did not get here by accident or good fortune alone. It's about remembering the hard winter of 1776, when our fragile American experiment seemed doomed to fail, and the early battles of 1861, when a union victory was anything but certain, and the summer of 1944, when the fate of a world rested on a perilous landing unlike any ever attempted.

It's about remembering each and every one of those moments when our survival as a nation came down not simply to the wisdom of our leaders or the resilience of our people, but to the courage and valor of our fighting men and women. For it's only by remembering these moments that we can truly appreciate a simple lesson of American life: That what makes all we are and all we aspire to be possible are the sacrifices of an unbroken line of Americans that stretches back to our Nation's founding.

That's the meaning of this holiday. That's a truth at the heart of our history. And that is a lesson I hope all Americans will carry with them this Memorial Day weekend and beyond.

Thank you.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2:15 p.m. on May 22 in the Green Room at the White House for broadcast on May 23. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 22 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 23.

Statement on the Death of Former President Roh Moo-hyun of South Korea
May 23, 2009

I was saddened by the news of the death of former President Roh Moo-hyun of the Republic of Korea. During his tenure, President Roh contributed to the strong and vital relationship between the United States and the Republic of Korea. On behalf of Government of the United States, I offer my condolences to his family and to the Korean people.

Remarks on the Situation in North Korea
May 25, 2009

Good morning, everybody. We are on our way to Arlington to remember the fallen and those who have served America with extraordinary valor. But before I go there, I wanted to say a few words about North Korea's announcement that it has conducted a nuclear test, as well as its decision to attempt a short-range missile launch.

North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs pose a great threat to the peace and security of the world, and I strongly condemn their reckless action. North Korea's actions endanger the people of Northeast Asia, they are a blatant violation of international law, and they contradict North Korea's own prior commitments.

Now, the United States and the international community must take action in response. The record is clear. North Korea has previously committed to abandoning its nuclear program. Instead of following through on that commitment, it has chosen to ignore that commitment. Its actions have also flown in the face of United Nations resolutions. As a result, North Korea is

not only deepening its own isolation, it's also inviting stronger international pressure. That's evident overnight, as Russia and China as well as our traditional allies of South Korea and Japan have all come to the same conclusion: North Korea will not find security and respect through threats and illegal weapons.

And we will work with our friends and allies to stand up to this behavior, and we will redouble our efforts toward a more robust international nonproliferation regime that all countries have responsibilities to meet. In this effort, the United States will never waiver from our determination to protect our people and the peace and security of the world.

Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:39 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Statement on the Situation in North Korea
May 25, 2009

Today North Korea said that it has conducted a nuclear test in violation of international law. It appears to also have attempted a short-range missile launch. These actions, while not a surprise given its statements and actions to date, are a matter of grave concern to all nations. North Korea's attempts to develop nuclear weapons, as well as its ballistic missile program, constitute a threat to international peace and security.

By acting in blatant defiance of the United Nations Security Council, North Korea is directly and recklessly challenging the international community. North Korea's behavior increases tensions and undermines stability in Northeast Asia. Such provocations will only serve to deepen North Korea's isolation. It will not find international acceptance unless it abandons its pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.

The danger posed by North Korea's threatening activities warrants action by the international community. We have been and will continue working with our allies and partners in the six-party talks as well as other members of the U.N. Security Council in the days ahead.

Remarks at a Memorial Day Ceremony in Arlington, Virginia
May 25, 2009

Thank you. Please be seated. Thank you. Thank you, Admiral Mullen, for that generous introduction and for your sterling service to our country. To members of our Armed Forces, to our veterans, to honored guests, and families of the fallen: I am deeply honored to be with you on Memorial Day.

Thank you to the superintendent, John Metzler, Jr., who cares for these grounds just as his father did before him. To the 3d Infantry Regiment who, regardless of weather or hour, guard the sanctity of this hallowed ground with the reverence it deserves, we are grateful to you. To servicemembers from every branch of the military who, each Memorial Day, place an American flag before every single stone in this cemetery, we thank you as well. We are indebted to all who tend to this sacred place.

Here lie Presidents and privates, Supreme Court Justices and slaves, generals familiar to history and unknown soldiers known only to God.

A few moments ago, I laid a wreath at their tomb to pay tribute to all who have given their lives for this country. As a nation, we have gathered here to repeat this ritual in moments of peace, when we pay our respects to the fallen and give thanks for their sacrifice. And we've gathered here in moments of war, when the somber notes of "Taps" echo through the trees and fresh grief lingers in the air.

Today is one of those moments where we pay tribute to those who forged our history, but hold closely the memory of those so

recently lost. And even as we gather here this morning, all across America, people are pausing to remember, to mourn, and to pray.

Old soldiers are pulling themselves a little straighter to salute brothers lost a long time ago. Children are running their fingers over colorful ribbons that they know signify something of great consequence, even if they don't know exactly why. Mothers are re-reading final letters home, clutching photos of smiling sons or daughters, as youthful and vibrant as they always will be.

They, and we, are the legacies of an unbroken chain of proud men and women who served their country with honor, who waged war so that we might know peace, who braved hardship so that we might know opportunity, who paid the ultimate price so that we might know freedom.

Those who rest in these fields fought in every American war. They overthrew an empire and gave birth to Revolution. They strained to hold a young union together. They rolled back the creeping tide of tyranny and stood post through a long twilight struggle, and they took on the terror and extremism that threatens our world's stability.

Their stories are the American story. More than seven generations of them are chronicled here at Arlington. They're etched into stone, recounted by family and friends and silently observed by the mighty oaks that have stood over burial after burial.

To walk these grounds then is to walk through that history. Not far from here, appropriately just across a bridge connecting Lincoln to Lee, Union and Confederate soldiers share the same land in perpetuity.

Just down the sweeping hill behind me rest those we lost in World War II, fresh-faced GIs who rose to the moment by unleashing a fury that saved the world. Next week, I'll visit Normandy, the place where our fate hung on an operation unlike any ever attempted, where it will be my tremendous honor to address some of the brave men who stormed those beaches 65 years ago.

And tucked in a quiet corner to our north are thousands of those we lost in Vietnam. We know for many the casualties of that war endure. Right now, there are veterans suffering and families tracing their fingers over black granite not 2 miles from here. They are why we pledge anew to remember their service and revere their sacrifice and honor them as they deserve.

This cemetery is, in and of itself, a testament to the price our Nation has paid for freedom. A quarter of a million marble headstones dot these rolling hills in perfect military order, worthy of the dignity of those who rest here. It can seem overwhelming. But for the families of the fallen, just one stone stands out, one stone that requires no map to find.

Today, some of those stones are found at the bottom of this hill in Section 60, where the fallen from Iraq and Afghanistan rest. The wounds of war are fresh in Section 60. A steady stream of visitors leaves reminders of life: photos, teddy bears, favorite magazines. Friends place small stones as a sign they stopped by. Combat units leave bottles of beer or stamp cigarettes into the ground as a salute to those they rode in battle with. Perfect strangers visit in their free time, compelled to tend to these heroes, to leave flowers, to read poetry, to make sure they don't get lonely.

If the fallen could speak to us, what would they say? Would they console us? Perhaps they might say that while they could not know they'd be called upon to storm a beach through a hail of gunfire, they were willing to give up everything for the defense of our freedom; that while they could not know they'd be called upon to jump into the mountains of Afghanistan and seek an elusive enemy, they were willing to sacrifice all for their country; that while they couldn't possibly know they would be called to leave this world for another, they were willing to take that chance to save the lives of their brothers and sisters in arms.

What is this thing—this sense of duty? What tugs at a person until he or she says, "Send me"? Why, in an age when so many have acted only in pursuit of the narrowest self interest, have the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines of this generation volunteered all that they have on behalf of others? Why have they been willing to bear the heaviest burden?

Whatever it is, they felt some tug; they answered a call; they said, "I'll go." That is why they are the best of America, and that is what separates them from those who've not served in uniform: Their extraordinary willingness to risk their lives for people they never met.

And my grandfather served in Patton's army in World War II, but I cannot know what it is like to walk into battle. I'm the father of two young girls, but I can't imagine what it's like to lose a child. These are things I cannot know. But I do know this: I am humbled to be the Commander in Chief of the finest fighting force in the history of the world.

I know that there is nothing I will not do to keep our country safe, even as I face no harder decision than sending our men and women to war, and no moment more difficult than writing a letter to the families of the fallen. And that's why as long as I am President, I will only send our troops into harm's way when it is absolutely necessary, and I will always provide them with the equipment and support they need to get the job done.

I know that military families sacrifice more than we can understand and feel an absence greater than we can comprehend. And that's why Michelle and I are committed to easing their burden.

And I know what a grateful nation owes to those who serve under its proud flag. And that's why I promise all our service men and women that when the guns fall silent and you do return home, it will be to an America that is forever here for you, just as you've been there for us.

With each death, we are heartbroken. With each death, we grow more determined. This bustling graveyard can be a restless place for the living, where solace sometimes comes only from meeting others who know similar grief. But it reminds us all the meaning of valor. It reminds us all of our own obligations to one another. It recounts that most precious aspect of our history and tells us that we will only rise or fall together.

So on this day of silent remembrance and solemn prayer, I ask all Americans, wherever you are, whoever you're with, whatever you're doing, to pause in national unity at 3 o'clock this afternoon. I ask you to ring a bell or offer a prayer; say a silent thank you. And commit to give something back to this Nation, something lasting, in their memory, to affirm in our own lives and advance around the world those enduring ideals of justice, equality, and opportunity for which they and so many generations of Americans have given that last full measure of devotion.

God bless you, God bless the fallen, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:18 a.m. in Memorial Amphitheater at Arlington National Cemetery. In his remarks, he referred to Adm. Michael G. Mullen, USN, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, who introduced the President; and John C. Metzler, Jr., superintendent, Arlington National Cemetery.

Remarks on the Nomination of Sonia Sotomayor To Be a Supreme Court Associate Justice

May 26, 2009

Thank you. Well, I'm excited too. [*Laughter*] Of the many responsibilities granted to a President by our Constitution, few are more serious or more consequential than selecting a Supreme Court Justice. The members of our highest court are granted life tenure, often serving long after the Presidents who appointed them, and they are charged with the vital task of applying principles put to paper more than 20 [2]* centuries ago to some of the most difficult questions of our time.

So I don't take this decision lightly. I've made it only after deep reflection and careful deliberation. While there are many qualities

* White House correction.

that I admire in judges across the spectrum of judicial philosophy and that I seek in my own nominee, there are few that stand out that I just want to mention.

First and foremost is a rigorous intellect, a mastery of the law, an ability to hone in on the key issues and provide clear answers to complex legal questions. Second is a recognition of the limits of the judicial role, an understanding that a judge's job is to interpret, not make, law, to approach decisions without any particular ideology or agenda, but rather a commitment to impartial justice, a respect for precedent, and a determination to faithfully apply the law to the facts at hand.

These two qualities are essential, I believe, for anyone who would sit on our Nation's highest court. And yet, these qualities alone are insufficient. We need something more. For as Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes once said: "The life of the law has not been logic; it has been experience." Experience being tested by obstacles and barriers, by hardship and misfortune, experience insisting, persisting, and ultimately, overcoming those barriers. It is experience that can give a person a common touch and a sense of compassion, an understanding of how the world works and how ordinary people live. And that is why it is a necessary ingredient in the kind of Justice we need on the Supreme Court.

The process of reviewing and selecting a successor to Justice Souter has been rigorous and comprehensive, not least because of the standard that Justice Souter himself has set with his formidable intellect and fair-mindedness and decency. I've sought the advice of Members of Congress on both sides of the aisle, including every member of the Senate Judiciary Committee. My team has reached out to constitutional scholars, advocacy organizations, and bar associations representing an array of interests and opinions. And I want to thank members of my staff and administration who have worked so hard and given so much of their time as part of this effort.

After completing this exhaustive process, I have decided to nominate an inspiring woman who I believe will make a great Justice, Judge Sonia Sotomayor of the great State of New York.

Over a distinguished career that spans three decades, Judge Sotomayor has worked at almost every level of our judicial system, providing her with a depth of experience and a breadth of perspective that will be invaluable as a Supreme Court Justice.

It's a measure of her qualities and her qualifications that Judge Sotomayor was nominated to the U.S. District Court by a Republican President, George H.W. Bush, and promoted to the Federal Court of Appeals by a Democrat, Bill Clinton. Walking in the door she would bring more experience on the bench, and more varied experience on the bench, than anyone currently serving on the United States Supreme Court had when they were appointed.

Judge Sotomayor is a distinguished graduate of two of America's leading universities. She's been a big-city prosecutor and a corporate litigator. She spent 6 years as a trial judge on the U.S. District Court and would replace Justice Souter as the only Justice with experience as a trial judge, a perspective that would enrich the judgments of the Court.

For the past 11 years, she has been a judge on the Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit of New York, one of the most demanding circuits in the country. There she has handed down decisions on a range of constitutional and legal questions that are notable for their careful reasoning, earning the respect of colleagues on the bench, the admiration of many lawyers who argue cases in her court, and the adoration of her clerks who look to her as a mentor.

During her tenure on the District Court, she presided over roughly 450 cases. One case in particular involved a matter of enormous concern to many Americans, including me, the baseball strike of 1994–95. [*Laughter*] In a decision that reportedly took her just 15 minutes to announce, a swiftness much appreciated by baseball fans everywhere—[*laughter*]—she issued an injunction that helped end the strike. Some say that Judge Sotomayor saved baseball.

Judge Sotomayor came to the District Court from a law firm where she was a partner focused on complex commercial litigation, gaining insight into the workings of a global

economy. Before that she was a prosecutor in the Manhattan DA's office, serving under the legendary Robert Morgenthau, an early mentor of Sonia's who still sings her praises today. There Sonia learned what crime can do to a family and a community and what it takes to fight it. It's a career that has given her not only a sweeping overview of the American judicial system, but a practical understanding of how the law works in the everyday lives of the American people.

But as impressive and meaningful as Judge Sotomayor's sterling credentials in the law is her own extraordinary journey. Born in the South Bronx, she was raised in a housing project not far from Yankee Stadium, making her a lifelong Yankee's fan. I hope this will not disqualify her—[*laughter*]—in the eyes of the New Englanders in the Senate. [*Laughter*]

Sonia's parents came to New York from Puerto Rico during Second World War, her mother as part of the Women's Army Corps. And, in fact, her mother is here today, and I'd like us all to acknowledge Sonia's mom. Sonia's mom has been a little choked up. [*Laughter*] But she, Sonia's mother, began a family tradition of giving back to this country. Sonia's father was a factory worker with a third grade education who didn't speak English. But like Sonia's mother, he had a willingness to work hard, a strong sense of family, and a belief in the American Dream.

When Sonia was 9, her father passed away, and her mother worked 6 days a week as a nurse to provide for Sonia and her brother, who is also here today, is a doctor and a terrific success in his own right. But Sonia's mom bought the only set of encyclopedias in the neighborhood, sent her children to a Catholic school called Cardinal Spellman, out of a belief that with a good education here in America all things are possible.

With the support of family, friends, and teachers, Sonia earned scholarships to Princeton, where she graduated at the top of her class, and Yale Law School, where she was an editor of the Yale Law Journal, stepping onto the path that led her here today.

Along the way she's faced down barriers, overcome the odds, lived out the American Dream that brought her parents here so long ago. And even as she has accomplished so much in her life, she has never forgotten where she began, never lost touch with the community that supported her. What Sonia will bring to the Court, then, is not only the knowledge and experience acquired over a course of a brilliant legal career, but the wisdom accumulated from an inspiring life's journey.

It's my understanding that Judge Sotomayor's interest in the law was sparked as a young girl by reading the Nancy Drew series—[*laughter*]—and that when she was diagnosed with diabetes at the age of 8, she was informed that people with diabetes can't grow up to be police officers or private investigators like Nancy Drew. And that's when she was told she'd have to scale back her dreams.

Well, Sonia, what you've shown in your life is that it doesn't matter where you come from, what you look like, or what challenges life throws your way, no dream is beyond reach in the United States of America.

And when Sonia Sotomayor ascends those marble steps to assume her seat on the highest court in the land, America will have taken another important step towards realizing the ideal that is etched above its entrance: Equal justice under the law.

I hope the Senate acts in a bipartisan fashion, as it has in confirming Judge Sotomayor twice before, and as swiftly as possible, so that she can take her seat on the Court in September and participate in deliberations as the Court chooses which cases it will hear this coming year.

And with that, I'd like all of you to give a warm greeting as I invite Judge Sotomayor to say a few words.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:13 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Celina Sotomayor, mother, and Juan Sotomayor, brother, of Supreme Court Associate Justice-designate Sotomayor. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Supreme Court Associate Justice-designate Sotomayor.

Statement on the Detention of Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma
May 26, 2009

I call on the Burmese Government to release National League for Democracy secretary general and Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi from detention immediately and unconditionally. I strongly condemn her house arrest and detention, which have also been condemned around the world. The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has issued opinions affirming that the detention of Aung San Suu Kyi dating back to 2003 is arbitrary, unjustified, and in contravention of Burma's own law, and the United Nations Security Council reaffirmed on May 22 their concern about the situation and called for the release of all political prisoners.

Aung San Suu Kyi's continued detention, isolation, and show trial based on spurious charges cast serious doubt on the Burmese regime's willingness to be a responsible member of the international community. This is an important opportunity for the Government in Burma to demonstrate that it respects its own laws and its own people, is ready to work with the National League for Democracy and other ethnic and opposition groups, and is prepared to move toward reconciliation.

By her actions, Aung San Suu Kyi has represented profound patriotism, sacrifice, and the vision of a democratic and prosperous Burma. It is time for the Burmese Government to drop all charges against Aung San Suu Kyi and unconditionally release her and her fellow political prisoners. Such an action would be an affirmative and significant step on Burma's part to begin to restore its standing in the eyes of the United States and the world community and to move toward a better future for its people.

Statement on the White House Organization for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism
May 26, 2009

As President, my highest priority is the safety and security of the American people. That is why, in February, I issued a Presidential Study Directive to look at how the White House should be organized to deal with the critical issues of homeland security and counterterrorism. I have carefully reviewed the findings and recommendations of that study, and am announcing a new approach which will strengthen our security and the safety of our citizens. These decisions reflect the fundamental truth that the challenges of the 21st Century are increasingly unconventional and transnational, and therefore demand a response that effectively integrates all aspects of American power.

Key decisions that I have made include:

- The full integration of White House staff supporting national security and homeland security. The new "National Security Staff" will support all White House policymaking activities related to international, transnational, and homeland security matters. The establishment of the new National Security Staff, under the direction of the National Security Advisor, will end the artificial divide between White House staff who have been dealing with national security and homeland security issues.
- Maintaining the Homeland Security Council as the principle venue for interagency deliberations on issues that affect the security of the homeland such as terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, natural disasters, and pandemic influenza. The Homeland Security Council, like its National Security Council counterpart, will be supported by the National Security Staff.
- The establishment of new directorates and positions within the National Security Staff to deal with new and emerging 21st Century challenges associated with cybersecurity, WMD terrorism,

transborder security, information sharing, and resilience policy, including preparedness and response.

- Retaining the position of Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism (AP/HSCT) as my principal White House advisor on these issues, with direct and immediate access to me. The security of our homeland is of paramount importance to me, and I will not allow organizational impediments to stand in the way of timely action that ensures the safety of our citizens.
- Creating a new Global Engagement Directorate to drive comprehensive engagement policies that leverage diplomacy, communications, international development and assistance, and domestic engagement and outreach in pursuit of a host of national security objectives, including those related to homeland security.

The United States faces a wide array of challenges to its security, and the White House must be organized to effectively and efficiently leverage the tremendous talent and expertise of the dedicated Americans who work within it. The creation of the National Security Staff and the other recommendations from the study that I have approved will help to keep our country safe and our Homeland secure.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this statement.

Remarks at a Fundraiser for Senator Harry Reid in Las Vegas, Nevada
May 26, 2009

Thank you so much. It is good to be back in Vegas. I was telling people, I am back in Caesars. That was the hotel where we stayed at when we were campaigning here in Nevada. I thought I had a pretty nice room. [*Laughter*] But now that I'm President, they upgraded me. I got the upgrade. And it's a really nice room now, man. [*Laughter*]

It is good to see all of you. How about Bette Midler? Right? Sheryl Crow, Rachael Yamagata, Rita Rudner, and Clint Holmes, give it up for our outstanding performers.

I want to thank all of the hard-working elected officials in Nevada, many of whom are here tonight. But there are a handful that I've got to give a special shout-out to: first of all, Congresswoman Shelley Berkley; our new Congresswoman Dina Titus; a great friend of mine, our—of my earliest supporters, cochair for Nevadans for Obama, Steven Horsford. And although she's not here tonight, she's doing a great job on behalf of everybody here in Vegas, the Nevada assembly speaker, Barbara Buckley. Please give her a big round of applause.

It is a pleasure to be here tonight on behalf of my good friend, your Senator, this Nation's Senate majority leader, Harry Reid. The last few years, Harry has done an extraordinary job as the leader of the U.S. Senate. And that's not easy, by the way. One of the last majority leaders wrote a book—titled it "Herding Cats." And that's what dealing with the Senate is all about. It is not easy. But Harry is somebody who has consistently fought on those issues that matter not just to Democrats but to middle class families all across America: good jobs, affordable health care, clean energy, world-class schools. This is a man who still makes his decisions and chooses battles based on the values that he was raised with in Searchlight, Nevada. [*Applause*] Are you from Searchlight? [*Laughter*] We got some Searchlight folks here. And that's why we need to keep Harry Reid exactly where he belongs, as the leader of the U.S. Senate, as somebody who carries the voices and the values of Searchlight and Nevada, all the small towns across America that have been forgotten for so long. He gives voice to forgotten people in Washington, DC.

Now, being back here with all of you in Nevada tonight reminds me of why I like getting out of Washington every so often. [*Laughter*] Because it brings back a lot of memories of all

those days that I spent here on the campaign trail. And I want to start tonight by saying thank you, because I know that I'm here because of so many people like you, people all across the country who made calls and knocked on doors and registered voters and dug deep and gave what they could, because you were hungry for new leadership and new ideas and a new kind of politics. And working with Harry Reid, that's what I'm delivering right now.

You believed that after an era of selfishness and greed, we can reclaim a sense of responsibility, from Main Street to Wall Street to Washington. You believed that instead of huge inequalities, we can restore a sense of fairness to our economy, building a new foundation for lasting growth and prosperity. You believed that in a time of war and turmoil, we can stand strong against our enemies and stand firmly for our ideals and show a new face of American leadership to the world.

That's the change you believed in, that's the trust you placed in me, and that's something I'll never forget. But we all know that winning the election was just the beginning of our work. That victory alone wasn't the change that we sought. It was just the opportunity to make change. And I don't know about you, but I think it's fair to say that over these past 4 months, we've done a pretty good job of seizing that opportunity.

To jump-start job creation, get our economy moving again, we helped with—we passed, with the help of Harry Reid and both Houses of Congress, the most ambitious economic recovery package in our Nation's history, gave tax cuts to 95 percent of working families, put people back to work modernizing our health care system, rebuilding our crumbling roads and bridges, investing in renewable energy that will help boost our economy and preserve our planet.

We launched plans to stabilize our housing market, unfreeze our credit markets, and ensure the survival of our auto industry in this new century. We passed a budget that will cut our deficit in half while making investments to spur long-term growth. We lifted the ban on Federal funding for stem cell research. We expanded the Children's Health Insurance Program to cover 11 million children in need. We passed a national service bill to create hundreds of thousands of opportunities for people to serve in their communities. We passed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act—the first bill I signed into law—because we should have equal pay for equal work. And just last week we passed a series of reforms that won't just change policies in Washington, they'll change the way business is done in Washington.

Last Tuesday, we brought auto executives, labor unions, environmental groups, Democrats, and Republicans together to set a national fuel efficiency standard for our cars and trucks for the first time in history, weaning ourselves off of Middle Eastern oil, but also saving our planet in the process. On Wednesday, I signed bipartisan legislation to help homeowners and crack down on predatory lenders who seek to take advantage of them. On Friday, I signed two laws, one that will protect consumers from unfair rate hikes and abusive fees levied by credit card companies, another that will eliminate waste in our defense budget and save taxpayers billions of dollars. And today I nominated a brilliant individual to serve on the United States Supreme Court, Judge Sonia Sotomayor.

Let me just tell you a little bit about this woman. This is a woman who will bring more experience on the bench than anyone currently serving on the Supreme Court had when they were appointed: She graduated the top of her class at Princeton; editor of the Law Journal at Yale; prosecutor in the Manhattan DA's office; corporate litigator; 6 years as a trial judge on the U.S. District Court; her 11th year on the U.S. Court of Appeals, the second highest court in the land. Nobody can say she's not qualified to be on the Supreme Court.

But as impressive and meaningful as Judge Sotomayor's sterling credentials in the law are, her extraordinary life journey is even more exceptional. Born in the South Bronx—[*applause*]—raised in a—hey, South Bronx. We got everybody here. We got Searchlight, we got South Bronx. [*Laughter*] All right, I'm not going to shout out everybody's—[*applause*]. Where was I? [*Laughter*] I'm talking about the next Supreme Court Justice, born in the South Bronx, raised in a housing project by parents who came

to New York from Puerto Rico during the Second World War. Father was a factory worker with a third grade education, didn't speak English. When Sonia was just 9, her father passed away. Her mother worked 6 days a week as a nurse to provide for Sonia and her brother, buying the only encyclopedias in the neighborhood, sending their children to Catholic school out of a belief that with a good education here in America all things are possible.

Sonia Sotomayor's life is proof that all things are possible. And when she ascends those marble steps to assume her seat on the highest court of the land, America will take another important step towards realizing the ideal that's chiseled above its entrance: Equal justice under the law.

So I'm inspired by her. I'm honored to nominate her. And I know that Harry Reid and others in the Senate will make sure that she is confirmed as our next Supreme Court Justice.

And I know that because Harry has just as improbable a story. And so do I. And that's what politics should be about, remembering that, for a whole lot of folks, life isn't easy. They're not born into advantage. But what sets America apart is the fact that we can make of our lives what we will. Yes we can. And that's what we're doing in Washington every day, figuring out how can we give a helping hand to ordinary Americans like Sonia Sotomayor's mother, like a young Harry Reid who needs a scholarship, maybe, like a Barack Obama who might need that inspiring teacher in a school.

And all in all, we're making progress on the important issues of the day, the issues that are going to matter not just for this generation but for the next generation. I'm pleased with how far we've come, but I'm not satisfied. I'm confident in the future, but I'm not content, not when there are workers out there still out of a job and families who still can't pay their bills, not when there are too many Americans who can't afford health care and so many of our kids being left behind, not when we're not leading the world in developing the new energy sources of the 21st century. We have come a long way. We can see the light on the horizon, but we've got a much longer journey ahead.

And that's why all of you are here tonight. That's why you're digging deep. That's why I know you're going to make those phone calls and knock on those doors and get to the polls again next November so that we make sure that Harry Reid continues his devoted service to this great State.

And that's why I'm here tonight, because I can't bring the change I promised all by myself. I can't rebuild an economy by myself. I can't reform our health care system and education systems and preserve our environment and keep our Nation safe all alone. That's not how it works. I need partners in Congress, leaders who are determined to make a difference for the folks they represent. And right now, more than ever before, we need their help. America needs their help. We need their help to build schools that meet high standards and close the achievement gap and prepare our kids for the challenges of the 21st century, reward teachers for performance and give them new pathways for advancement.

We need their help to reach the goal I've set for our education in this country that by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. We need their help to pass a comprehensive energy and climate bill that will finally reduce our dangerous dependence on foreign oil, offer new energy incentives to reduce the pollution that threatens our health and our climate.

We need a plan that will create millions of new jobs, producing wind turbines and solar panels, like you're doing right here in Nevada. Because the nation that leads the 21st century in clean energy, that nation will lead in the global economy. America can and must be that nation.

We need help to create a 21st century health care system to cut costs for families and businesses across America. And working with Harry Reid and other Members of Congress, we are going to do everything we can to achieve comprehensive health care reform by the end of this year. We've been waiting too long. We're going to make it happen this year.

And finally, even as we do all this, we need to restore fiscal discipline in Washington so we don't leave our children and grandchildren with a mountain of debt. Already, my administration has identified more than 100 Government programs that we can reduce or eliminate. They're not working the way they should. That will save taxpayers nearly $17 billion next year alone. We're going through the budget line by line looking for more places where we can shift dollars from things that don't work to things that do.

We're living through extraordinary times. We didn't ask for the challenges that we face, but we are determined to answer the call to meet those challenges, to cast aside the old arguments and overcome the stubborn divisions and move forward as one people and one nation. It won't be easy, Nevada. There will be setbacks, Las Vegas. It will take time but I promise you, I promise you, I'll always tell you the truth about the challenges we face. I'll always tell you the truth about the steps we're taking to meet them. I will continue to measure my progress by the progress that the American people see in their own lives.

And so if you stand with me, if you stand with Harry Reid, I know that years from now we will look back on this time, at this moment and say, that's when the American people came together to reclaim their future to write the next great chapter of the American story.

We can only do it with Harry Reid, and I can only do it with you, the people of Las Vegas, the people of Nevada, the people of America. Thank you. God bless you. May God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:33 p.m. in the Colosseum at Caesars Palace hotel. In his remarks, he referred to entertainers Bette Midler, Sheryl Crow, Rachael Yamagata, Rita Rudner, and Clint Holmes; former Senate Majority Leader Chester T. "Trent" Lott; and Celina Sotomayor, mother, and Juan Sotomayor, brother, of Supreme Court Associate Justice-designate Sotomayor. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 27. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada
May 27, 2009

Thank you so much. Everybody please have a seat. Thank you so much. I've got some special acknowledgments that I have to make. First of all, we've got some members of the congressional delegation Nevada who are doing outstanding jobs not only for Nevada but also for the men and women in uniform. And so please give a warm welcome to Congresswoman Shelley Berkley, Congresswoman Dina Titus. And we're in his district, he couldn't be here, but Congressman Dean Heller, please give him a big round of applause.

I also want to thank the State controller, Kim Wallin, for her great work; the Nevada secretary of State, Ross Miller; Nevada State treasurer, Kate Marshall. I want to thank the Brigadier General, Stanley Kresge, for the wonderful, outstanding work that he does, as well as Colonel Dave Belote, who just gave me an outstanding tour of the solar panel facility out here. But mainly I want to thank all of you, the men and women in uniform, for your service to our country. We're grateful to you. Thank you.

I just spoke to a handful of your commanders here. I know some are about to be deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, many have just come back. The fact that you serve each and every day to keep us safe is something that every American is grateful for. And so if I don't do anything else as your Commander in Chief, I'm going to make sure that we're there for you just as you've been there for us. So thank you very much.

Finally, let me acknowledge Senator Harry Reid, not just for the generous introduction, not only because he's been a great friend, not only because he's been an outstanding Majority Leader, but also because of everything that he's done for the people of Nevada and for the armed services. He is somebody who has never forgotten his roots. After all these years, he still

brings the voices and values of Searchlight, Nevada to the Nation's most important debates in Washington, DC, and we are better off because he does. So please give Harry Reid a big round of applause.

You know, it's always a pleasure to get out of Washington a little bit. Washington is okay, but it's nice taking some time to talk to Americans of every walk of life outside of the Nation's Capital. And there's nothing like a quick trip to Vegas in the middle of the week. Like millions of other Americans, we come to this beautiful city for the sights and for the sounds. And today we come for the sun, because right now, we're standing near the largest solar electric plant of its kind in the entire Western Hemisphere—the entire Western Hemisphere. More than 72,000 solar panels built on part of an old landfill provide 25 percent of the electricity for the 12,000 people who live and work here at Nellis, that's the equivalent of powering about 13,200 homes during the day.

It's a project that took about half a year to complete, created 200 jobs, and will save the United States Air Force, which is the largest consumer of energy in the Federal Government, nearly $1 million a year. It will also reduce harmful carbon pollution by 24,000 tons per year, which is the equivalent of removing 4,000 cars from our roads. And most importantly, this base serves as a shining example of what's possible when we harness the power of clean, renewable energy to build a new, firmer foundation for economic growth.

Now, that's the kind of foundation we're trying to build all across America. One hundred days ago, in the midst of the worst economic crisis in half a century, we passed the most sweeping economic recovery act in history, a plan designed to save jobs, create new ones, and put money in people's pockets. It's a plan designed not only to revive the economy in the short term, but to rebuild the economy over the long term. It's a plan that we passed thanks to the tireless efforts of Harry Reid and Congresswoman Berkley and Congresswoman Titus and all the other outstanding public servants in Washington.

But if it hadn't been for Harry Reid—because the Senate is tough—moving this Recovery Act through Congress with the skill and tenacity and urgency of somebody who knows the struggles that millions of people are going through, we would have not gotten it done. So I am eternally grateful to him and the other members of the congressional delegation for helping to pass this plan.

And 100 days later, we're already seeing results. And today we're releasing a report that details the progress that we've made in every region of the country. In these last few months, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act has saved or created nearly 150,000 jobs, jobs building solar panels and wind turbines, making homes and buildings more energy efficient. They're the jobs of teachers and police officers and nurses who have not been laid off as a consequence of this Recovery Act. They're the jobs fixing roads and bridges, jobs at startups and small businesses, and jobs that will put thousands of young Americans to work this summer.

Also in the Recovery Act, by the way, is all sorts of construction taking place on bases just like Nellis to support military families, and I know that that is something that Michelle Obama has taken a lot of time looking into; that's something that I'm spending a lot of time thinking about. We want to make sure that our bases and our facilities are the best in the world for our best troops.

Ninety-five percent of all working families saw their take-home pay increase because of the tax cut that we provided in the Recovery Act. Fifty-four million seniors received $250 extra in their Social Security checks. Laid-off workers have received greater unemployment benefits and paid less for their health care. For the thousands of families whose homes have been made more energy efficient, it's also saved them about $350 on their energy bills. Other Americans saved thousands by taking advantage of the tax credits the Recovery Act has provided for the purchase of a new home, or a new fuel-efficient car, or energy efficient cooling and heating systems, windows, and insulation. And all of this has helped to fuel demand that is helping businesses put more Americans back to work.

But this is just the beginning. There are still too many Americans out of work and too many who still worry that their job may be next. There are still too many families struggling to pay the bills, and too many businesses struggling to keep their doors open. And that's why we will continue to implement the Recovery Act as quickly and effectively as possible over the next 2 years. We're just at the start of this Recovery Act. We are going to keep on going through this year and into next year, because we are going to make sure that not only are we putting people back to work, but we're laying the foundation for a better economy. And that's why my administration will continue an unrelenting, day-by-day effort to fight for economic recovery on all fronts.

Now, I just want to emphasize, even as we clear away some of the wreckage and debris of this extraordinary recession, I've also said that our next task is making sure that this doesn't happen again. We can't return to the same bubble-and-bust, borrow-and-spend economy based on maxed-out credit cards and overleveraged banks and financial profits that were only real on paper—see, that young lady agrees with me. [*Laughter*] We have to lay a new foundation for prosperity, a foundation constructed on the pillars that will grow our economy and help America compete in the 21st century.

And a renewable energy revolution is one of those pillars. We know the cost of our oil addiction all too well. It's the cost measured by the billions of dollars we send to nations with unstable or unfriendly regimes. We help to fund both sides of the war on terror because of our addiction to oil. It's the cost of our vulnerability to the volatility of the oil markets. It's the cost we feel in shifting weather patterns that are already causing unprecedented droughts and more intense storms. It's a cost we can't bear any longer.

Today, projects like the one at Nellis are still the exception to the rule, unfortunately. America produces less than 3 percent of our electricity through renewable sources of energy like wind and solar—less than 3 percent. In contrast, Denmark produces 20 percent of their electricity through wind. We pioneered solar technology, but we've fallen behind countries like Germany and Japan in generating it, even though they get less sun than we do. They certainly get less sun than Nevada. [*Laughter*]

So we've got a choice: We can remain the world's leading importer of oil, sending our money and our wealth away, or we can become the world's leading exporter of clean energy. We can hand over the jobs of the future to our competitors, or we can confront what they've already recognized as the great opportunity of our time: The nation that leads the world in creating new sources of clean energy will be the nation that leads the 21st century global economy. And that's the nation I want America to be, and I know that's the nation you want America to be.

Already, we've made more progress on this front in the last 4 months than we have in the last three decades. Last week, I brought auto executives, labor unions, environmental groups, Democrats, and Republicans together to set the toughest ever national fuel efficiency standard for our cars and trucks, a standard that will save 1.8 billion barrels of oil over the lifetime of the vehicles sold in the next 5 years.

In Congress, leaders like Harry Reid are also working to pass a historic energy plan that will help end our dependence on foreign oil while preventing the worst consequences of climate change. It's a system—it's a plan that will create a system of clean energy incentives that will create good, American jobs and crack down on polluters who pollute the air we breathe and the water we drink.

Finally, by the end of the next 2 years, the Recovery Act will have enabled the—a doubling of our Nation's capacity to generate renewable energy by investing in projects just like the one on this Air Force base. And today I'm announcing the availability of funding for two Recovery Act programs that will help us reach that goal.

The first is a solar energy technologies program that will help replicate the success of the Nellis project in cities and States across America, because in this case, what happens in Vegas should not stay in Vegas. [*Laughter*] We want everybody to know what we're doing here in Vegas. We'll invest in the development and deployment of solar technology wherever it can

thrive, and we'll find the best ways to integrate solar power into our electric grid.

The second program I'm announcing will help develop the use of geothermal energy in America. As many of you in Nevada know, geothermal energy is literally defined as "heat from the Earth." This heat can then be harnessed as a clean, affordable, and reliable source of energy. And already, Nevada has 17 industrial scale geothermal plants, and your capacity to generate this type of power is expected to increase in the next few years. The program we're announcing will help accelerate this process here and across America. So this is something that we expect will—[*applause*]—this will create more jobs, it will create more businesses, and more affordable electricity for the American people.

Now, from where we stand today, the road to economic recovery is still long. We've got a lot of work to do. There are a lot of folks who are still hurting out there. And the road to a new, clean energy economy is even longer. We're not going to do it overnight. But after 4 months of this administration and 100 days of this Recovery Act, we have carved out a path toward progress. It's a path that begins in places just like this Air Force base, where ordinary citizens tap into their sense of innovation and ingenuity to reinvent the world around them.

This base has been known as the "Home of the Fighter Pilot." Now it's the home of the largest solar energy installation of its kind in the Western Hemisphere. And by the way, the two concepts are connected because it is good for our national security if we've got more control over our own energy use. And that's the story that will be told all across America, in cities and towns, where a shuttered factory reopens to build wind turbines; where a hospital treats patients with new technology and pulls up their history with new electronic records; where a young entrepreneur with a nest egg and a good idea starts a business and creates more jobs.

That's how we move America forward. This is how we've always moved forward. It happens slowly, in fits and starts, but it always happens surely when we are dedicated to bringing about change. It happens not by chance or by luck, but because the American people keep pushing ahead, persevering through hardship, growing through challenge, building something firmer and stronger in place of what was. That's the work we've begun in these last few months, and with your help, this is the work we will continue to do in the days and months ahead.

For all of you who are serving in our Armed Forces, we want to make sure that our civilians are mobilizing and working on behalf of this country just as ably as you are. We salute you; we thank you. Thank you, everybody. God bless you, God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:23 a.m. in Thunderbird Hangar. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Dina Titus; Brig. Gen. Stanley T. Kresge, USAF, commander, U.S. Air Force Warfare Center, Nellis Air Force Base; and Col. Howard D. "Dave" Belote, commander, 99th Air Base Wing, Nellis Air Force Base.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority and an Exchange With Reporters
May 28, 2009

President Obama. Hello, everybody. Well, it is a great pleasure to welcome President Abbas to the Oval Office. We had—we just completed an extensive conversation, both privately as well as with our delegations, about how we can advance peace in the Middle East and how we can reaffirm some core principles that I think can result in Palestinians and Israelis living side by side in peace and security.

As I've said before, I've been a strong believer in a two-state solution that would provide the Israelis and Palestinians the peace and security that they need. I am very appreciative that President Abbas shares that view.

And when Prime Minister Netanyahu was here last week, I reiterated to him that the framework that's been provided by the roadmap is one that they can advance the interests of Israel, can advance the interests of the Palestinian people, and can also advance the interests of the United States.

We are a stalwart ally of Israel, and it is in our interests to assure that Israel is safe and secure. It is our belief that the best way to achieve that is to create the conditions on the ground and set the stage for a Palestinian state as well. And so what I told Prime Minister Netanyahu was, is that each party has obligations under the roadmap. On the Israeli side, those obligations include stopping settlements; they include making sure that there is a viable potential Palestinian state. On the Palestinian side, it's going to be important and necessary to continue to take the security steps on the West Bank that President Abbas has already begun to take, working with General Dayton. We've seen great progress in terms of security in the West Bank. Those security steps need to continue because Israel has to have some confidence that security in the West Bank is in place in order for us to advance this process.

And I also mentioned to President Abbas in a frank exchange that it was very important to continue to make progress in reducing the incitement and anti-Israel sentiments that are sometimes expressed in schools and mosques and in the public square, because all those things are impediments to peace.

The final point that I made was the importance of all countries internationally, but particularly the Arab States, to be supportive of a two-state solution. And we discussed how important it is that the Arab States, building off of some of the recognition of the possibilities of the two-state solution that are contained in the Arab Peace Initiative, continue to provide economic support as well as political support to President Abbas's efforts as he moves the Palestinian Authority forward, as he continues to initiate the reforms that have taken place, and as he hopefully is going to be able to enter into constructive talks with the Israelis.

So again, I want to thank President Abbas for his visit and a very constructive conversation. I am confident that we can move this process forward if all the parties are willing to take on the responsibilities and meet the obligations that they've already committed to and if they keep in mind not just the short-term tactical issues that are involved, but the long-term strategic interests of both the Israelis and the Palestinians to live side by side in peace and security.

So thank you again, Mr. President, for being here.

President Abbas. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for receiving us here at the White House. We came here to tell you, first of all, that we congratulate you for the confidence that was expressed by the American people in electing you the President of the United States. And we wish you all success in your mission.

Mr. President, you refer to the international commitment as the—stipulated in the roadmap. I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm to you that we are fully committed to all of our obligations under the roadmap, from the A to the Z. And we believe, like you, Mr. President, that carrying out the obligations of all parties under the roadmap will be the only way to achieve the durable, comprehensive, and just peace that we need and desire in the Middle East.

Mr. President, I believe that the entire Arab world and the Islamic world, they are all committed to peace. We've seen that through the Arab League peace initiative that simply talks about land for peace as a principle. I believe that if the Israelis would withdraw from all occupied Palestinian, Syrian, and Lebanese land, the Arab world will be ready to have normal relationships with the State of Israel.

On our part, we are carrying our security and responsibility in the West Bank, and have law and order in that areas under our control because we believe that it is in our interest to have security. It's in the interest of stability in the region. And, here, I would like to pay tribute and thank you to General Dayton and all those who work with him in helping and supporting and training our security organizations to carry out their duties and responsibilities.

Mr. President, I believe that time is of the essence. We should capitalize on every minute

and every hour in order to move the peace process forward, in order to cement this process, in order to achieve the agreement that would lead to peace.

Thank you very much.

President Obama. Thank you. We got time for a couple questions.

Julianna [Julianna Goldman, Bloomberg].

The President's Upcoming Visit to Saudi Arabia/Saudi Arabia-U.S. Relations/Energy

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I'm going to ask you a question about your trip next week to Riyadh. Reducing U.S. dependence on foreign oil is the cornerstone of your energy policy. And when you meet with Riyadh's King Abdallah next week, what message will you take to him about U.S. energy policy, oil prices, output quotes, and the like?

President Obama. Well, you know, Saudi Arabia has been an important strategic partner in providing us with our critical energy needs. We appreciate that. It's a commercial relationship as well as a strategic relationship. And I don't think that it's in Saudi Arabia's interests or our interests to have a situation in which our economy is dependent on, or better yet, is disrupted constantly by huge spikes in energy prices. And it's in nobody's interest, internationally, for us to continue to be so heavily dependent on fossil fuels that we continue to create the greenhouse gases that threaten the planet.

So in those discussions, I'll be very honest with King Abdallah, with whom I've developed a good relationship, indicating to him that we're not going to be eliminating our need for oil imports in the immediate future; that's not our goal. What our goal has to be is to advance the clean energy solutions in this country that can strengthen our economy, put people back to work, diversify our energy sources.

And, you know, interestingly enough, you're seeing the Saudis make significant investments both in their own country and outside of their country in clean energy, as well, because I think they recognize that we've got finite—we have a finite supply of oil. There are going to be a whole host of countries like China and India that have huge populations, need to develop rapidly.

If everybody is dependent solely on oil as opposed to energy sources like wind and solar, if we are not able to figure out ways to sequester carbon—and that would allow us to use coal in a nonpolluting way—if we don't diversify our energy sources, then all of us are going to be in trouble. And so I don't think that will be a difficult conversation to have.

Yes, sir.

Middle East Peace Process

[*At this point, a reporter asked a question in Arabic, and no translation was provided. The reporter then asked a question in English, as follows.*]

Q. And, Mr. President, what if Israel keeps declining to accept the two-state solution and to freeze the settlement activities, how will the U.S.—would intervene in the peace process?

President Obama. Well, I think it's important not to assume the worst, but to assume the best. And in my conversations with Prime Minister Netanyahu, I was very clear about the need to stop settlements; to make sure that we are stopping the building of outposts; to work with the Palestinian Authority in order to alleviate some of the pressures that the Palestinian people are under in terms of travel and commerce, so that we can initiate some of the economic development plans that Prime Minister Netanyahu himself has said are so important on the ground.

And that conversation only took place last week. I think that we don't have a moment to lose, but I also don't make decisions based on just a conversation that we had last week, because, obviously, Prime Minister Netanyahu has to work through these issues in his own Government, in his own coalition, just as President Abbas has a whole host of issues that he has to deal with.

But I'm confident that if Israel looks long term—looks at its long-term strategic interests, then it will recognize that a two-state solution is in the interests of the Israeli people as well as the Palestinians. And, certainly, that's how the United States views our long-term

strategic interests: a situation in which the Palestinians can prosper, they can start businesses; they can educate their children; they can send them to college; they can prosper economically. That kind of situation is good for Israel's security. And I am confident that the majority of the Israeli people would see that as well.

Now, obviously, the Israelis have good reason to be concerned about security, and that's why it's important that we continue to make progress on the security issues that so often end up disrupting peace talks between the two parties.

[*An English translation for the question asked in Arabic was provided by the interpreter, as follows.*]

Interpreter. The other question was to President Abbas.

President Abbas, you've met with President Obama, and perhaps you shared some of your ideas about permanent status resolution. What was in these ideas, and what kind of appropriate mechanism that you have discussed to realize them and carry them out?

President Abbas. We have shared some ideas with the President, but all of them basically are embodied in the roadmap and the Arab League initiative, without any change, without any modification.

Regarding the mechanism to carry it out, of course, there is a mechanism through the Quartet as well as the followup committee from the Arab nations. Such a proposal will need to be looked at, studied; then we'll see where to go from here.

President Obama. Christi [Christi Parsons, Los Angeles Times].

The President's Upcoming Visit to the Middle East/Middle East Peace Process

Q. Do you plan to unveil any part or all of your proposal for Mideast peace when you're speaking in Cairo next week, or is it some other message you intend to deliver?

President Obama. I want to use the occasion to deliver a broader message about how the United States can change for the better its relationship with the Muslim world. That will require, I think, a recognition on both the part of the United States as well as many majority Muslim countries about each other, a better sense of understanding and, I think, the possibilities of achieving common ground.

I want to emphasize the importance of Muslim Americans in the United States and the tremendous contributions they make, something that, I think, oftentimes, is missed in some of these discussions. But, certainly, the issue of Middle East peace is something that is going to need to be addressed. It is a critical factor in the minds of many Arabs in countries throughout the region and beyond the region. And I think that it's—it would be inappropriate for me not to discuss those. I'm not going to give you a preview right now, Christi, but it's something that we'll certainly discuss.

One thing that I didn't mention earlier that I want to say I very much appreciate is that President Abbas, I think, has been in—under enormous pressure to bring about some sort of unity government and to negotiate with Hamas. And I am very impressed and appreciative of President Abbas's willingness to steadfastly insist that any unity government would have to recognize the principles that have been laid out by the Quartet.

In the absence of a recognition of Israel and a commitment to peace and a commitment to previous agreements that have already been made, it would be very hard to see any possibility of peace over the long term. And so I want to publicly commend President Abbas for taking that position, because I think it's a position that's in the interest of the Palestinian people, in the interests of peace in the region, and it's something that the United States very much agrees with.

Middle East Peace Process

[*A reporter asked two questions in Arabic, and no translation was provided. The reporter then asked a question in English, as follows.*]

Q. Mr. President, if I may, President Bush hoped that he would have a Palestinian state by the time he leaves office. It didn't happen. Do you have a time frame when this Palestinian state is going to happen? Are you—are we talking about a timetable for negotiation?

[*An English translation for the questions asked in Arabic was provided by the interpreter, as follows.*]

Interpreter. The first question to President Abbas: Mr. President, did you receive any kind of clear-cut commitments from President Obama, or any pledges that would help you to strengthen your hands when you are dealing with the Palestinian public and opposition among Palestinians that this peace process activities could be viable and could be actually productive?

And the second question was, did President Obama ask you to have a meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu?

President Abbas. President Obama basically talked and reaffirmed the international commitments that we all agreed to, and they are all embodied in the roadmap. He talked about the necessity to have two states; he talked about the importance of stopping settlement activities; and he also talked about the importance of achieving peace through negotiating all permanent status issues.

Obviously, without discussing and negotiating permanent status issues there will be no progress. We know that all the six issues of permanent status were discussed with the previous Israeli Prime Minister, Mr. Olmert, and what it—is needed right now is to resume the discussions with the current Israeli Government.

President Obama. And in terms of a timetable, I have not put forward a specific timetable. But let me just point out, when I was campaigning for this office, I said that one of the mistakes I would not make is to wait until the end of my first term, or the end of my second term, before we've moved on this issue aggressively. And we've been true to that commitment.

From the first week that I arrived in this office, I've insisted that this is a critical issue to deal with, in part because it is in the United States interest to achieve peace. The absence of peace between Palestinians and Israelis is a impediment to a whole host of other areas of increased cooperation and more stable security for people in the region, as well as the United States. And so I want to see progress made, and we will work very aggressively to achieve it.

I don't want to put an artificial timetable, but I do share President Abbas's feelings, and I believe that many Israelis share the same view that time is of the essence, that we can't continue with a drift, with the increased fear and resentments on both sides, the sense of hopelessness around the situation that we've seen for many years now. We need to get this thing back on track. And I will do everything I can, and my administration will do everything I can. My special envoy, George Mitchell, is working as diligently as he can, as is my entire national security team, to make sure that we jump-start this process and get it moving again.

All right. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:15 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel; Lt. Gen. Keith W. Dayton, USA, U.S. security coordinator to Israel and the Palestinian Authority; King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Saud of Saudi Arabia; and U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George J. Mitchell. President Abbas referred to former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel. President Abbas and some reporters spoke in Arabic, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser in Beverly Hills, California

May 27, 2009

The President. It's good to be back in L.A. Everybody, have a seat, have a seat. Who knows the score? [*Laughter*] Lakers by one—what is it, third quarter? All right, well,

good luck. It's not the Bulls. [*Laughter*] Joe Baca is not the Bulls, man. [*Laughter*] But the Lakers are pretty good, I got to admit.

I want to acknowledge the extraordinary performance this evening: first of all, Chicago's own, Jennifer Hudson; the group I grew up with, Earth Wind & Fire; Roberto Granados; the Crenshaw High School Choir——

Audience member. We love you!

The President. ——I love you back—and the Rickey Minor Band. Give it up for Rickey Minor, they were sounding good. I was going to come out and sing—[*laughter*]—but my political advisers told me not to. [*Laughter*]

It is good to be back in L.A. My main task here tonight is just to say thank you. First of all, I want to thank so many of you who were knocking on doors and making phone calls and traveling to other cities, turning an election into a movement, a movement for change.

But the fact that you're here tonight indicates that you understand the campaign just gave us a chance to bring about change. It didn't actually deliver the change, it gave us the chance, the opportunity; it put us in place to bring about change. So now the hard part starts.

So I decided I should come back to Los Angeles with all my great supporters—[*applause*]—and just to give you a little progress report, just a little progress report.

We started off in the midst of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. And so what we decided to do was pass the largest economic recovery package in the history of the United States of America, and we got it done in one month. All across America you've got folks who are going to work rebuilding roads and bridges, but also building an electric grid that can help move renewable energies from production to conception, saving teachers' jobs that might have been eliminated if we hadn't passed it, making sure that folks who lose their jobs still have health care, providing a whole host of support services to communities that were in need.

Then we signed something called the Lilly Ledbetter Act because we thought it made sense that women should get equal pay for equal work—I don't know if you agree with that. We removed the ban on funding stem cell research because we believe in the possibilities of science.

What else did we do? [*Laughter*] Let's see, we put in place a whole series of measures to stabilize the housing market, to stabilize the credit markets. We passed——

Audience member. [*Inaudible*]

The President. I'm getting to that, relax. [*Laughter*] We passed historic legislation to crack down on predatory abuses on credit cards so you guys aren't paying those extra fees. We expanded the Children's Health Insurance Program so that 11 million children who didn't have health insurance now have it, including the children of undocumented workers. That was all just in the first couple of months.

This past week, just this past week, we brought together—in an historic meeting we brought together auto executives, labor unions, Democrats, Republicans, to announce for the first time ever a national fuel efficiency standard that applies across the board, 35.5 miles per gallon, which will save the United States 1.8 billion dollars of oil and may just help us save the planet in the process. We're dealing with climate change in a way that we haven't dealt with.

And then a couple of days ago I nominated this lady—[*applause*]—Sonia Sotomayor to be the next Supreme Court Justice of the United States of America. I mean, think about the journey this woman has traveled: from South Bronx, goes to Princeton, summa cum laude—summa cum laude, not just, you know, magna or laude laude—[*laughter*]—but summa cum laude; goes on to Yale, serves on the Law Journal; Manhattan DA; private practice, partner in a big law firm; goes on to become a district trial judge and then an appellate judge; has more experience than any of the current Supreme Court Justices when they were nominated. This woman is brilliant, she is qualified, I want her confirmed, I want her walking up those marble steps and starting to provide some justice.

So we've made some progress. Yes, we have. But we've got more work to do. We can't rest on our laurels because we've got a lot of work to do. All across America, right now, millions have lost their jobs or are fearful of losing their jobs. All across America people have lost their homes

or are fearful of losing their homes. All across America people have lost their health care or are waking up in the middle of the night wondering if their child gets sick will they be bankrupt because they don't have decent health care or they just can't afford the premiums they're paying. All across America there are children who are trapped in schools that don't educate them, and they look out and they see very little hope on the horizon.

And around the world we've got a host of challenges: ending a war in Iraq, making sure that we come to a—that we're able to achieve our goals of rooting out Al Qaida in Afghanistan, making sure that we reconcile our need for security with our need to uphold our values even when it's difficult, even when it's hard, even when we'd like to just push those ideals aside. That's not who we are as a people, so we've got some work to do there.

We have to deal with climate change here in the United States and internationally. We've got to be leaders and not followers. So we've got a full menu. We've got a lot of work to do.

But I am confident that we're going to get it done, because what you taught me during the campaign, and what you continue to teach me through your involvement in this process is that when the American people decide it's time to bring about change, change happens. When the American people are determined to bring about justice, justice happens. When the American people decide we're going to give opportunity to all children and not just some children, then we can make sure that those children are going to get a decent shot at life.

So your determination, your willingness to provide support—not just to me, but to the Democratic Party—to dig deep even when times are tough, to continue to get involved not just through your financial contributions, but through all the activism that you represent on a whole host of issues all across this State and all across the country, that's my insurance that change is going to come. Administrations come and go, but the American people and that spirit of innovation and that willingness to take on the toughest challenge and that belief that there are always brighter days ahead if we're willing to work for it. That's my insurance policy, that's how we're going to bring about change. So take heart of the change we've already brought.

But I want you to know, Los Angeles, you ain't seen nothing yet. We are going to deal with these issues. We are going to bring about a better America. And you and me, we're going to do it together, arm in arm. We're going to march forward.

Thank you. God bless you. God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:29 p.m. at the Beverly Hilton hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Joe Baca; and entertainers Jennifer Hudson, Roberto Granados, Earth Wind & Fire, and Rickey Minor. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 29. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting Designations Under the Kingpin Act

May 28, 2009

Dear _____:

This report to the Congress, under section 804(b) of the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act, 21 U.S.C. 1901–1908 (the "Kingpin Act"), transmits my designations of the following four foreign entities as appropriate for sanctions under the Kingpin Act and reports my direction of sanctions against them under the Act:

Daniel Rendon Herrera (Colombia)
Haji Juma Khan Organization (Afghanistan)
Walid Makled Garcia (Venezuela)
Imam Bheel (Pakistan)

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Carl Levin, chairman, and John McCain, ranking member, Senate Committee on Armed Services; Max S. Baucus, chairman, and Charles E. Grassley, ranking member, Senate Committee on Finance; John F. Kerry, chairman, and Richard G. Lugar, ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Dianne Feinstein, chair, and Christopher S. Bond, vice chairman, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence; Patrick J. Leahy, chairman, and Jefferson B. Sessions III, ranking member, Senate Committee on the Judiciary; Isaac N. Skelton IV, chairman, and John M. McHugh, ranking member, House Committee on Armed Services; Howard L. Berman, chairman, and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, ranking member, House Committee on Foreign Affairs; Silvestre Reyes, chairman, and Peter Hoekstra, ranking member, House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence; John Conyers, Jr., chairman, and Lamar S. Smith, ranking member, House Committee on the Judiciary; and Charles B. Rangel, chairman, and David L. Camp, ranking member, House Committee on Ways and Means. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 29.

Remarks on Securing the Nation's Information and Communications Infrastructure

May 29, 2009

Hello, everybody. Please be seated. We meet today at a transformational moment, a moment in history when our interconnected world presents us at once with great promise but also great peril.

Now, over the past 4 months, my administration has taken decisive steps to seize the promise and confront these perils. We're working to recover from a global recession while laying a new foundation for lasting prosperity. We're strengthening our Armed Forces as they fight two wars, at the same time we're renewing American leadership to confront unconventional challenges, from nuclear proliferation to terrorism, from climate change to pandemic disease. And we're bringing to Government and to this White House unprecedented transparency and accountability and new ways for Americans to participate in their democracy.

But none of this progress would be possible, and none of these 21st century challenges can be fully met, without America's digital infrastructure, the backbone that underpins a prosperous economy and a strong military and an open and efficient Government. Without that foundation, we can't get the job done.

It's long been said that the revolutions in communications and information technology have given birth to a virtual world. But make no mistake: This world, cyberspace, is a world that we depend on every single day. It's our hardware and our software, our desktops and laptops and cell phones and BlackBerries that have become woven into every aspect of our lives.

It's the broadband networks beneath us and the wireless signals around us, the local networks in our schools and hospitals and businesses, and the massive grids that power our Nation. It's the classified military and intelligence networks that keep us safe and the World Wide Web that has made us more interconnected than at any time in human history. So cyberspace is real, and so are the risks that come with it.

It's the great irony of our information age. The very technologies that empower us to create and to build also empower those who would disrupt and destroy. And this paradox, seen and unseen, is something that we experience every day.

It's about the privacy and the economic security of American families. We rely on the

Internet to pay our bills, to bank, to shop, to file our taxes. But we've had to learn a whole new vocabulary just to stay ahead of the cyber criminals who would do us harm: spyware and malware and spoofing and phishing and botnets. Millions of Americans have been victimized, their privacy violated, their identities stolen, their lives upended, and their wallets emptied. According to one survey, in the past 2 years alone, cyber crime has cost Americans more than $8 billion.

I know how it feels to have privacy violated because it has happened to me and the people around me. It's no secret that my Presidential campaign harnessed the Internet and technology to transform our politics. What isn't widely known is that during the general election, hackers managed to penetrate our computer systems. To all of you who donated to our campaign, I want you to all rest assured, our fundraising web site was untouched. [*Laughter*] So your confidential personal and financial information was protected.

But between August and October, hackers gained access to e-mails and a range of campaign files, from policy position papers to travel plans. And we worked closely with the CIA—with the FBI and the Secret Service and hired security consultants to restore the security of our systems. It was a powerful reminder: In this information age, one of your greatest strengths—in our case, our ability to communicate to a wide range of supporters through the Internet—could also be one of your greatest vulnerabilities.

So this is a matter, as well, of America's economic competitiveness. The small businesswoman in St. Louis, the bond trader in the New York Stock Exchange, the workers at a global shipping company in Memphis, the young entrepreneur in Silicon Valley, they all need the networks to make the next payroll, the next trade, the next delivery, the next great breakthrough. E-commerce alone, last year, accounted for some $132 billion in retail sales.

But every day we see waves of cyber thieves trolling for sensitive information: the disgruntled employee on the inside, the lone hacker a thousand miles away, organized crime, the industrial spy, and increasingly, foreign intelligence services. In one brazen act last year, thieves used stolen credit card information to steal millions of dollars from 130 ATMs—machines in 49 cities around the world, and they did it in just 30 minutes. A single employee of an American company was convicted of stealing intellectual property reportedly worth $400 million. It's been estimated that last year alone cyber criminals stole intellectual property from businesses worldwide worth up to $1 trillion. In short, America's economic prosperity in the 21st century will depend on cybersecurity.

And this is also a matter of public safety and national security. We count on computer networks to deliver our oil and gas, our power and our water. We rely on them for public transportation and air traffic control. Yet we know that cyber intruders have probed our electrical grid and that in other countries cyber attacks have plunged entire cities into darkness.

Our technological advantage is a key to America's military dominance. But our defense and military networks are under constant attack. Al Qaida and other terrorist groups have spoken of their desire to unleash a cyber attack on our country, attacks that are harder to detect and harder to defend against. Indeed, in today's world, acts of terror could come not only from a few extremists in suicide vests, but from a few key strokes on the computer, a weapon of mass disruption.

In one of the most serious cyber incidents to date against our military networks, several thousand computers were infected last year by malicious software, malware. And while no sensitive information was compromised, our troops and defense personnel had to give up those external memory devices, thumb drives, changing the way they used their computers every day.

And last year, we had a glimpse of the future face of war. As Russian tanks rolled into Georgia, cyber attacks crippled Georgian Government web sites. The terrorists that sowed so much death and destruction in Mumbai relied not only on guns and grenades but also on GPS and phones using voice-over-the-Internet. For all these reasons, it's now clear this cyber threat is one of the most

serious economic and national security challenges we face as a nation.

It's also clear that we're not as prepared as we should be, as a Government or as a country. In recent years, some progress has been made at the Federal level. But just as we failed in the past to invest in our physical infrastructure—our roads, our bridges, and rails—we've failed to invest in the security of our digital infrastructure.

No single official oversees cybersecurity policy across the Federal Government, and no single agency has the responsibility or authority to match the scope and scale of the challenge. Indeed, when it comes to cybersecurity, Federal agencies have overlapping missions and don't coordinate and communicate nearly as well as they should, with each other or with the private sector. We saw this in the disorganized response to Conficker, the Internet worm that in recent months has infected millions of computers around the world.

This status quo is no longer acceptable, not when there's so much at stake. We can and we must do better. And that's why shortly after taking office I directed my National Security Council and Homeland Security Council to conduct a top-to-bottom review of the Federal Government's efforts to defend our information and communications infrastructure and to recommend the best way to ensure that these networks are able to secure our networks as well as our prosperity.

And our view—our review was open and transparent. I want to acknowledge, Melissa Hathaway, who is here, who is the Acting Senior Director for Cyberspace on our National Security Council, who led the review team, as well as the Center for Strategic and International Studies bipartisan Commission on Cybersecurity, and all who were part of our 60-day review team. They listened to a wide variety of groups, many of which are represented here today and I want to thank for their input: industry and academia, civil liberties and private—privacy advocates. We listened to every level and branch of Government, from local to State to Federal, civilian, military, homeland as well as intelligence, Congress, and international partners as well. I consulted with my national security teams, my homeland security teams, and my economic advisers.

Today I'm releasing a report on our review and can announce that my administration will pursue a new comprehensive approach to securing America's digital infrastructure. This new approach starts at the top with this commitment from me: From now on, our digital infrastructure, the networks and computers we depend on every day, will be treated as they should be, as a strategic national asset. Protecting this infrastructure will be a national security priority. We will ensure that these networks are secure, trustworthy, and resilient. We will deter, prevent, detect, and defend against attacks and recover quickly from any disruptions or damage.

To give these efforts the high-level focus and attention they deserve—and as part of the new, single national security staff announced this week—I'm creating a new office here at the White House that will be led by the cybersecurity coordinator. Because of the critical importance of this work, I will personally select this official. I'll depend on this official in all matters relating to cybersecurity, and this official will have my full support and regular access to me as we confront these challenges.

Today I want to focus on the important responsibilities this office will fulfill: orchestrating and integrating all cybersecurity policies for the Government, working closely with the Office of Management and Budget to ensure agency budgets reflect those priorities, and in the event of major cyber incident or attack, coordinating our response.

To ensure that Federal cyber policies enhance our security and our prosperity, my cybersecurity coordinator will be a member of the national security staff, as well as the staff of my National Economic Council. To ensure that policies keep faith with our fundamental values, this office will also include an official with a portfolio specifically dedicated to safeguarding the privacy and civil liberties of the American people.

There's much work to be done, and the report we're releasing today outlines a range of actions that we will pursue in five key areas.

First, working in partnership with the communities represented here today, we will develop a new comprehensive strategy to secure America's information and communications networks. To ensure a coordinated approach across Government, my cybersecurity coordinator will work closely with my Chief Technology Officer, Aneesh Chopra, and my Chief Information Officer, Vivek Kundra. To ensure accountability in Federal agencies, cybersecurity will be designated as one of my key management priorities. Clear milestones and performance metrics will measure progress. And as we develop our strategy, we will be open and transparent, which is why you'll find today's report and a wealth of related information on our web site, www.whitehouse.gov.

Second, we will work with all the key players, including State and local governments and the private sector, to ensure an organized and unified response to future cyber incidents. Given the enormous damage that can be caused by even a single cyber attack, ad hoc responses will not do, nor is it sufficient to simply strengthen our defenses after incidents or attacks occur. Just as we do for natural disasters, we have to have plans and resources in place beforehand, sharing information, issuing warnings, and ensuring a coordinated response.

Third, we will strengthen the public/private partnerships that are critical to this endeavor. The vast majority of our critical information infrastructure in the United States is owned and operated by the private sector. So let me be very clear: My administration will not dictate security standards for private companies. On the contrary, we will collaborate with industry to find technology solutions that ensure our security and promote prosperity.

Fourth, we will continue to invest in the cutting-edge research and development necessary for the innovation and discovery we need to meet the digital challenges of our time. And that's why my administration is making major investments in our information infrastructure: laying broadband lines to every corner of America, building a smart electric grid to deliver energy more efficiently, pursuing a next generation of air traffic control systems, and moving to electronic health records, with privacy protections, to reduce costs and save lives.

And finally, we will begin a national campaign to promote cybersecurity awareness and digital literacy from our boardrooms to our classrooms and to build a digital workforce for the 21st century. And that's why we're making a new commitment to education in math and science and historic investments in science and research and development. Because it's not enough for our children and students to master today's technologies—social networking and e-mailing and texting and blogging—we need them to pioneer the technologies that will allow us to work effectively through these new media and allow us to prosper in the future. So these are the things we will do.

Let me also be clear about what we will not do. Our pursuit of cybersecurity will not include—I repeat, will not include—monitoring private sector networks or Internet traffic. We will preserve and protect the personal privacy and civil liberties that we cherish as Americans. Indeed, I remain firmly committed to net neutrality so we can keep the Internet as it should be, open and free.

The task I have described will not be easy. Some 1.5 billion people around the world are already online, and more are logging on every day. Groups and governments are sharpening their cyber capabilities. Protecting our prosperity and security in this globalized world is going to be a long, difficult struggle demanding patience and persistence over many years.

But we need to remember we're only at the beginning. The epochs of history are long: the agricultural revolution, the Industrial Revolution. By comparison, our information age is still in its infancy. We're only at Web 2.0. Now our virtual world is going viral, and we've only just begun to explore the next generation of technologies that will transform our lives in ways we can't even begin to imagine.

So a new world awaits, a world of greater security and greater potential prosperity, if we reach for it, if we lead. So long as I'm President of the United States, we will do just that. And the United States, the nation that

invented the Internet, that launched an information revolution, that transformed the world, will do what we did in the 20th century and lead once more in the 21st.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:08 a.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Remarks Following a Briefing at the Federal Emergency and Management Agency
May 29, 2009

The President. All right. Well, for all of you who've just joined us, I've just received a briefing here at FEMA at the National Response Coordination Center for our preparations for this year's hurricane season, which begins on Monday. And I want to thank Secretary Napolitano, as well as John Brennan, my Homeland Security Adviser. And we've welcomed Craig Fugate, who has hit the ground running and is already doing an outstanding job not just leading this briefing but leading this excellent agency. And I want to thank all the people here at FEMA who do such an excellent job for their diligence and their commitment for this task.

We are all here together because we are determined to be as prepared as possible when the next catastrophic hurricane hits the United States. And we want to make sure that cities and our people remain resilient enough to weather any storm.

Our top priority is ensuring the public safety. That means appropriate sheltering in place, or, if necessary, getting as many people as possible out of harm's way prior to landfall. But most of the work, as you would hear from these individual agencies, most of the work takes place before a hurricane hits. True preparedness means having Federal and State and local governments all coordinating effectively, and as you just heard, one of the most important things we can do is make sure the families have prepared appropriately.

We just saw some statistics coming out of Florida indicating that a huge percentage of people in hurricane areas simply don't make plans. They don't have a plan, they don't have a set of contingencies that will allow them to respond in an effective way. Those people who have the capacity to plan, they will thereby relieve some of the resources that the Government has to provide, and we can stay focused on those folks who are most vulnerable and have the most difficulty dealing with a storm.

So I hope that message of personal responsibility sinks in. And, Craig, is there a web site that we want to provide that would help people formulate a plan right now?

Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator W. Craig Fugate. Yes, sir, it's real simple, ready.gov.

The President. Ready.gov.

Administrator Fugate. It will help you get ready for your disaster threats.

The President. Okay. That's the reason that all the representatives here met and have been meeting over the last several months, is because they want to be ready. And States are going to have the primary responsibility in preparing for and responding to disasters, but they're going to have the full resources of the Federal Government backing them up.

And the last point, I guess, I would like to make, is that when you go on ready.gov, you'll see that—I think the public will see that a lot of these plans are not complicated. They're pretty simple. It's a matter of having a basic emergency supply kit with items such as water, some nonperishable food, an all-weather radio, a flashlight, a first aid kit; making an emergency family plan; staying informed of developments in your area; and learning about your community's emergency plans.

So I have no greater responsibility than the safety of the American people. I want to thank all of the people here today who, in their various roles, do such a terrific job even in nonemergency situations, helping to keep the American people safe. But as we enter into hurricane season, I hope that everybody who's watching is going to be paying attention and

take seriously their responsibilities as citizens so that the entire country is ready.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:17 p.m. in the National Response Coordination Center at FEMA Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano; and Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism John O. Brennan.

Statement on Beginning Negotiations on the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty
May 29, 2009

There is no greater security challenge in the world today than turning the tide on nuclear proliferation, and pursuing the goal of a nuclear-free world. I welcome today's important agreement at the Conference on Disarmament to begin negotiations on a fissile material cutoff treaty, which will end production of fissile materials for use in atomic bombs. As I announced in Prague, a verified cutoff treaty is an essential element of my vision for a world free of nuclear weapons. The treaty will help to cap nuclear arsenals, strengthen the consensus underlying the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and deny terrorists access to nuclear materials.

Today's decision ends more than a decade of inactivity in the Conference on Disarmament and signals a commitment to work together on this fundamental global challenge. It is good to see the Conference at work again. I am committed to consult and cooperate with the governments represented at the Conference on Disarmament to complete this treaty as soon as possible.

The President's Weekly Address
May 30, 2009

This week, I nominated Judge Sonia Sotomayor of the U.S. Court of Appeals to replace Justice David Souter, who is retiring after nearly two decades on the Supreme Court. After reviewing many terrific candidates, I am certain that she is the right choice. In fact, there has not been a nominee in several generations who has brought the depth of judicial experience to this job that she offers.

Judge Sotomayor's career began when she served as an assistant district attorney in New York, prosecuting violent crimes in America's largest city. After leaving the DA's office, she became a litigator, representing clients in complex international legal disputes. She was appointed to the U.S. District Court, serving 6 years as a trial judge where she presided over hundreds of cases. And most recently, she has spent 11 years on the U.S. Court of Appeals, our Nation's second highest court, grappling with some of the most difficult constitutional and legal issues we face as a nation. She has more experience on the Federal bench than any incoming Supreme Court Justice in the past 100 years. Quite simply, Judge Sotomayor has a deep familiarity with our judicial system from almost every angle.

And her achievements are all the more impressive when you consider what she had to overcome in order to achieve them. Judge Sotomayor grew up in a housing project in the South Bronx. Her parents came to New York from Puerto Rico during the Second World War. Her father was a factory worker with a third grade education. And when she was just 9 years old, he passed away. Her mother worked 6 days a week as a nurse to provide for her and her brother, buying the only set of encyclopedias in the neighborhood and sending her children to Catholic school. That's what made it possible for Judge Sotomayor to attend two of America's leading universities, graduating at the top of her class at Princeton University, and studying at Yale Law School, where she won a prestigious post as an editor of the school's law journal.

These many years later, it was hard not to be moved by Judge Sotomayor's mother, sitting in the front row at the White House, her eyes welling with tears, as her daughter, who had come so far, for whom she had sacrificed so much, was nominated to the highest court in the land.

This is what makes Judge Sotomayor so extraordinary. Even as she has reached the heights of her profession, she has never forgotten where she began. She has faced down barriers, overcome difficult odds, and lived the American Dream. As a Justice of the Supreme Court, she will bring not only the experience acquired over the course of a brilliant legal career, but the wisdom accumulated over the course of an extraordinary journey, a journey defined by hard work, fierce intelligence, and that enduring faith that in America all things are possible.

It is her experience in life and her achievements in the legal profession that have earned Judge Sotomayor respect across party lines and ideological divides. She was originally named to the U.S. District Court by the first President Bush, a Republican. She was appointed to the Federal Court of Appeals by President Clinton, a Democrat. She twice has been overwhelmingly confirmed by the U.S. Senate. And I am gratified by the support for this nomination voiced by members of the legal community who represent views from across the political spectrum.

There are, of course, some in Washington who are attempting to draw old battle lines and playing the usual political games, pulling a few comments out of context to paint a distorted picture of Judge Sotomayor's record. But I am confident that these efforts will fail, because Judge Sotomayor's 17-year record on the bench—hundreds of judicial decisions that every American can read for him or herself—speak far louder than any attack. Her record makes clear that she is fair, unbiased, and dedicated to the rule of law. As a fellow judge on her court, appointed by Ronald Reagan, said recently, "I don't think I'd go as far as to classify her in one camp or another. I think she just deserves the classification of outstanding judge."

Congress returns this week, and I hope the confirmation process will begin without delay. No nominee should be seated without rigorous evaluation and hearing; I expect nothing less. But what I hope is that we can avoid the political posturing and ideological brinksmanship that has bogged down this process and Congress in the past. Judge Sotomayor ought to be on the bench when the Supreme Court decides what cases to hear this year, and I'm calling on Democrats and Republicans to be thorough and timely in dealing with this nomination.

As President, there are few responsibilities more serious or consequential than the naming of a Supreme Court Justice. The members of our highest court are granted life tenure. They're charged with applying principles put to paper more than two centuries ago to some of the most difficult questions of our time, and the impact of their decisions extends beyond an administration, but for generations to come.

This is a decision that I have not taken lightly, and it is one that I am proud to have made. I know that Justice Sotomayor will serve this Nation with distinction. And when she ascends those marble steps to assume her seat on the Supreme Court, bringing a lifetime of experience on and off the bench, America will have taken another important step towards realizing the ideal that is chiseled above its entrance: Equal justice under the law.

Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 3:50 p.m. on May 29 in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House for broadcast on May 30. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 29 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on May 30. In the address, the President referred to Celina Sotomayor, mother, and Juan Sotomayor, brother, of Supreme Court Associate Justice-designate Sonia Sotomayor.

Statement on the Death of George R. Tiller
May 31, 2009

I am shocked and outraged by the murder of Dr. George Tiller as he attended church services this morning. However profound our differences as Americans over difficult issues such as abortion, they cannot be resolved by heinous acts of violence.

Remarks on the United States Automobile Industry
June 1, 2009

Good morning, everybody. Just over 2 months ago, I spoke with you in this same spot about the challenges facing our auto industry, and I laid out what needed to be done to save two of America's most storied automakers, General Motors and Chrysler. These companies were facing a crisis decades in the making, and having relied on loans from the previous administration, were asking for more.

From the beginning, I made it clear that I would not put any more tax dollars on the line if it meant perpetuating the bad business decisions that had led these companies to seek help in the first place. I refused to let these companies become permanent wards of the state, kept afloat on an endless supply of taxpayer money. In other words, I refused to kick the can down the road.

But I also recognized the importance of a viable auto industry to the well-being of families and communities across our industrial Midwest and across the United States. In the midst of a deep recession and financial crisis, the collapse of these companies would have been devastating for countless Americans and done enormous damage to our economy beyond the auto industry. It was also clear that if GM and Chrysler remade and retooled themselves for the 21st century, it would be good for American workers, good for American manufacturing, and good for America's economy. I decided then that if GM and Chrysler and their stakeholders were willing to sacrifice for their companies' survival and success, if they were willing to take the difficult but necessary steps to restructure and make themselves stronger, leaner, and more competitive, then the United States Government would stand behind them.

The original restructuring plans submitted by GM and Chrysler earlier this year did not call for the sweeping changes these companies needed to survive, and I couldn't in good conscience proceed on that basis. So we gave them a chance to develop a stronger plan that would put them on a path toward long-term viability. The 60 days GM had to submit its revised plans have now elapsed, and I want to say a few words about where we are and what steps will be taken going forward. But before I do, I want to give you an update on where things stand with Chrysler.

When my administration took office and began going over Chrysler's books, the future of this great American car company was uncertain. In fact, it was not clear whether it had any future at all. But after consulting with my Auto Task Force, industry experts, and financial advisers, and after asking many tough questions, I became convinced that if Chrysler were willing to undergo a restructuring, and if it were able to form a partnership with a viable global car company, then Chrysler could get a new lease on life.

Well, that more promising scenario has now come to pass. Today, after taking a number of painful steps and moving through a quick, efficient, and fair bankruptcy process, a new, stronger Chrysler is poised to complete its alliance with Fiat. Just 31 days after Chrysler's Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing, a court has approved the Chrysler/Fiat alliance, paving the way for a new Chrysler to emerge from bankruptcy in the next few days.

What happens next is in the hands of their executives, managers, and workers, as it is for any private company. But what the completion of this alliance means is that tens of thousands

of jobs that would have been lost if Chrysler had liquidated will now be saved, and that consumers have no reason at all to worry about a restructuring, even one as painful as what Chrysler underwent.

Keep in mind, many experts said that a quick, surgical bankruptcy was impossible. They were wrong. Others predicted that Chrysler's decision to enter bankruptcy would lead to an immediate collapse in consumer confidence that would send car sales over a cliff. They were wrong as well. In fact, Chrysler sold more cars in May than it did in April, in part because consumers were comforted by our extraordinary commitment to stand behind a quick bankruptcy process. All in all, it's a dramatic—an outcome dramatically better than what appeared likely when this process began.

Now, the situation we found at General Motors was very different from what we found at Chrysler, largely because GM is a different kind of company. It is much larger and much more complex, with operations all over the globe. In this context, GM's management team, including its new CEO, Fritz Henderson, its interim chairman, Kent Kresa, and all of their colleagues, has—have worked—has worked tirelessly to produce a plan that meets the strict standards I laid out at the beginning to streamline GM's brands, clean up GM's balance sheet, and make it possible for GM to compete and succeed.

Working with my Auto Task Force, GM and its stakeholders have produced a viable, achievable plan that will give this iconic American company a chance to rise again. It's a plan tailored to the realities of today's auto market, a plan that positions GM to move toward profitability, even if it takes longer than expected for our economy to fully recover, and it's a plan that builds on GM's recent progress in making better cars. As this plan takes effect, GM will start building a larger share of its cars here at home, including fuel-efficient cars. In fact, if all goes according to plan, the share of GM cars sold in the United States that are made here will actually grow for the first time in three decades.

Now, any time a business as large as General Motors goes through a restructuring, it is extremely difficult to find common ground among all of the company's stakeholders. But while the deal that has been worked out is tough, it is also fair.

It will require the United Auto Workers to make further cuts in compensation and retiree health care benefits, painful sacrifices on top of all that they have already done. It will require GM shareholders to give up the remaining value of their shares, just as they would have had to do in any private restructuring of this kind. And it will also provide unsecured bondholders with an equitable outcome, an outcome that will let them recover more than the current value of their claims and substantially more than they would have recovered if the Government had not intervened and GM had liquidated. That's why a majority of GM's bondholders already support this deal.

Throughout this process, I wanted to ensure that none of GM's stakeholders receives special treatment because of our Government's involvement. That's why I instructed my Auto Task Force to treat all of GM's stakeholders fairly and to ensure that this restructuring was carried out in a way that was consistent with past precedent, and it was.

What we have then is a credible plan that is full of promise. But GM can't put this plan into effect on its own. Executing this plan will require a substantial amount of money that only a government can provide. Considering GM's extensive operations within their borders, the governments of Canada and Ontario have agreed to do their part with an investment in GM's future, and I want to thank them for doing so. I also want to thank the Government of Germany for working diligently to reach a memorandum of understanding on the sale of a major stake in GM's European division and for providing interim funding that will make it possible for that transaction to be finalized.

But, of course, GM is an American company with tens of thousands of employees in this country, and responsibility for its future ultimately rests with us. That's why our Government will be making a significant additional investment of about $30 billion in GM, an investment that will entitle American taxpayers to ownership of about 60 percent of the new GM.

Now, let me talk about this. I recognize that this may give some Americans pause, so let me explain as clearly as possible why we are making this investment. We inherited a financial crisis unlike any that we've seen in our time. This crisis crippled private capital markets and forced us to take steps in our financial system and with our auto companies that we would not have otherwise even considered. These steps have put our Government in the unwelcome position of owning large stakes in private companies for the simple and compelling reason that their survival and the success of our overall economy depend on it.

Understand, we're making these investments not because I want to spend the American people's tax dollars, but because I want to protect them. Instead of taking so much stock in GM, we could have simply offered the company more loans. But for years, GM has been buried under an unsustainable mountain of debt, and piling an irresponsibly large debt on top of the new GM would mean simply repeating the mistakes of the past. So we are acting as reluctant shareholders, because that is the only way to help GM succeed.

What we are not doing, what I have no interest in doing, is running GM. GM will be run by a private board of directors and management team with a track record in American manufacturing that reflects a commitment to innovation and quality. They, and not the Government, will call the shots and make the decisions about how to turn this company around. The Federal Government will refrain from exercising its rights as a shareholder in all but the most fundamental corporate decisions. When a difficult decision has to be made on matters like where to open a new plant or what type of new car to make, the new GM, not the United States Government, will make that decision. In short, our goal is to get GM back on its feet, take a hands-off approach, and get out quickly.

Exiting a restructuring of this scale, however, requires not only new investment. It also requires giving GM a chance to start anew by clearing away the massive past debts that are weighing the company down. And that's why earlier today GM did what Chrysler has successfully done and filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy with the support of its key stakeholders and the United States Government.

In all likelihood, this process will take more time for GM than it did for Chrysler because GM is a bigger, more complex company. But Chrysler's extraordinary success reaffirms my confidence that GM will emerge from its bankruptcy process quickly and as a stronger and more competitive company. And I want to remind everyone that if you are considering buying a GM car during this period of restructuring, your warrantees will be safe and Government-backed.

So I'm confident that the steps I'm announcing today will mark the end of an old GM and the beginning of a new GM, a new GM that can produce the high-quality, safe, and fuel-efficient cars of tomorrow, that can lead America towards an energy independent future and that is once more a symbol of America's success.

But I want to be honest with you. Building a leaner GM will come at a cost. It will take a painful toll on many Americans who have relied on General Motors throughout the generations. So I want to say a word directly to all the men and women watching today, wondering what all of this will mean as far as their own lives are concerned.

I know you've already seen more than your fair share of hard times. We saw 400,000 jobs lost in the auto industry in the year before this restructuring even began. I will not pretend the hard times are over. Difficult days lie ahead. More jobs will be lost; more plants will close; more dealerships will shut their doors, and so will many parts suppliers.

But I want you to know that what you're doing is making a sacrifice for the next generation, a sacrifice you may not have chose to make, but a sacrifice you were nevertheless called to make so that your children and all of our children can grow up in an America that still makes things, that still builds cars, that still strives for a better future.

As our autoworkers and auto communities pass through these difficult times, we, as a nation, must do our part. That's why, in March, I appointed Ed Montgomery Director of Recovery for Auto Communities and Workers.

That's why 2 weeks ago, Ed announced a green jobs training program for autoworkers in hard-hit communities. And that's why last week, Ed and Karen Mills, my Small Business Administration chief, traveled to Indiana to announce a new plan to provide loans to auto, RV, and boat dealers to help finance floor plans. That's why we are accelerating the purchase of a Federal fleet of cars to jump-start demand and give the industry a boost at a time when it needs one. And that's why I'm calling on Congress to pass fleet modernization legislation that can provide a credit to consumers who turn in old cars and purchase cleaner, more fuel-efficient cars. These are important steps on the long road to overcoming a problem that didn't happen overnight and will not be solved overnight.

I recognize that today's news carries a particular importance because it's not just any company we're talking about, it's GM. It's a company that's not only been a source of income, but a source of pride for generations of autoworkers and generations of Americans. But while the GM of the future will be different from the GM of the past, I am absolutely confident that if well managed, a new GM will emerge that can provide a new generation of Americans with the chance to live out their dreams, that can outcompete automakers around the world, and that can once again be an integral part of America's economic future. And when that happens, we can truly say that what is good for General Motors and all who work there is good for the United States of America.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:51 a.m. in the Grand Foyer at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Kent Kresa, interim nonexecutive chairman of the board, General Motors Co.; and Karen G. Mills, Administrator, Small Business Administration.

Statement on Automobile Manufacturer Chrysler, LLC
June 1, 2009

The decision by Judge Gonzalez of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York to approve the Chrysler sale transaction paves the way for the new Chrysler to successfully emerge from bankruptcy as a new, stronger, more competitive company for the future. Only a month ago, this great American company's very future was in doubt. Now, as a result of a substantial commitment by the U.S. Government, and tough sacrifices from all stakeholders involved, Chrysler has a new lease on life.

We said this process would be completed quickly and efficiently, and that's exactly what has been accomplished today. Tens of thousands of American jobs will be saved as a result of this extraordinary effort.

Interview With Justin Webb of BBC World News
June 1, 2009

The President's Visit to Egypt/U.S. Relations With Muslim Nations

Mr. Webb. Mr. President, thank you very much for talking to the BBC.

The President. Thank you, sir. Thank you very much for having me.

Mr. Webb. It's really good to be here. Let's turn straight to your big speech, a hugely important speech you're making in Cairo on Thursday. Many Muslims think they're owed an apology, actually, for the Bush years and the sins that, in their view, were committed by the United States during those years. Is this speech in any way an apology?

The President. No, I think what we want to do is open a dialog. And, you know, there are misapprehensions about the West on the part of the Muslim world, and obviously, there are some big misapprehensions about the Muslim world when it comes to those of us in the West. And it is my firm belief that no one speech is

going to solve every problem; there are no silver bullets. There are very real policy issues that have to be worked through that are difficult, and, ultimately, it's going to be action and not words that determine the path of progress from here on out. But it did seem to me that this was an opportunity for us to get both sides to listen to each other a little bit more and hopefully learn something about different cultures.

U.S. Relations With Muslim Nations

Mr. Webb. You say, "both sides," so I take from that that Muslims listening to this speech you are hoping will also be changed by it and their attitude to the United States perhaps change. What needs to change on the behalf of those you're actually speaking to?

The President. Well, I mean, look, let's just take one small example: The U.S. Muslim population is more numerous than the populations of many majority-Muslim countries. So you know, we have a huge and thriving Muslim American community. We have Muslim Americans represented or who are serving in Congress. We've got a President who's got family members who are Muslim.

So this notion that somehow America is detached, is removed, sees some clash of civilizations as inevitable, I think a lot of the propaganda and dogma that's churned out there is inaccurate.

Now, the flip side is, is that in the wake of 9/11—what is also true is that in a whole host of our actions, and sometimes in our words, America has not been as careful to distinguish our very real need to hunt down extremists who would do us harm—something that's necessitated by our self-defense—and broader policy differences or cultural differences that exist that are best approached through diplomacy and conversation and some self-reflection on our part. And so that's the kind of back and forth that I think is going to need to take place.

And the last point I made, because I should actually correct myself, when I said "both sides," there are actually many sides to this, because one of the misapprehensions about—misperceptions about the Muslim community is that it's somehow monolithic. And, you know, setting aside differences between Shi'a and Sunni, the Muslim country that I lived in when I was a child, Indonesia, obviously, is very different from Pakistan, is very different from Saudi Arabia. And so we have to also recognize that there are going to be differences based on national identity and not just faith.

The President's Visit to Egypt/Democratization

Mr. Webb. You're making this speech in Cairo. Amnesty International says there are thousands of political prisoners in Egypt. How do you address that issue?

The President. Well, look, obviously, in the Middle East, across a wide range of types of governments, there are some human rights issues. I don't think there's any dispute about that. The message I hope to deliver is that democracy, rule of law, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, those are not simply principles of the West to be hoisted on these countries, but rather what I believe to be universal principles that they can embrace and affirm as part of their national identity.

Now, the danger I think is when the United States or any country thinks that we can simply impose these values on another country with a different history and a different culture. Our job is——

Mr. Webb. But you can encourage——

The President. Absolutely we can encourage, and I expect we will be encouraging——

Mr. Webb. But you will.

The President. And I think the thing that we can do most importantly is serve as a good role model. And that's why, for example, closing Guantanamo, from my perspective, as difficult as it is, is important, because part of what we want to affirm to the world is that these are values that are important even when it's hard, maybe especially when it's hard, and not just when it's easy.

President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt

Mr. Webb. Do you regard President Mubarak as an authoritarian ruler?

The President. No, I tend not to use labels for folks. I haven't met him; I've spoken to him on the phone. He has been a stalwart ally, in many respects, to the United States. He has sustained peace with Israel, which is a very difficult thing to do in that region, but he has never resorted to unnecessary demagoguing of the issue and has tried to maintain that relationship.

So I think he has been a force for stability and good in the region. Obviously, there has been—there have been criticisms of the manner in which politics operates in Egypt, and, as I said before, you know, the United States job is not to lecture but to encourage, to lift up what we consider to be the values that, ultimately, will work not just for our country but for the aspirations of a lot of people.

U.S. Foreign Policy/Middle East Peace Process

Mr. Webb. A lot of people are looking for specifics in your speech, and one of the areas they're going to be fascinated by, hanging on your every word, is Israel and the Palestinians and what you say about that. You've made it very clear in recent weeks to the Israeli Government that you want settlement building to be frozen in existing settlements. They've made it equally clear that they're not going to do that. So what happens now?

The President. Well, it's still early in the conversation. I've had one meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu. I think that we have not seen a set of potential gestures from other Arab States or from the Palestinians that might deal with some Israeli concerns. I do believe that if you follow the roadmap approach that has been laid out, if Israel abides by its obligations that includes no settlements, if the Palestinians abide by their obligations to deal with the security situation, to eliminate incitement, if all the surrounding Arab States, working with the Quartet, are able to encourage economic development and political development, then I think that we can actually make some progress.

So you know, one of the things that in the 24/7 news cycle is very difficult to encourage is patience, and diplomacy is always a matter of a long, hard slog. It's never a matter of quick results.

Middle East Peace Process

Mr. Webb. I'll accept that, but you have the Israeli—a senior member of the Israeli cabinet, the Transport Minister saying, "I want to say in a crystal-clear manner [that] the current Israeli Government will not accept in any fashion that legal settlement activity be frozen." I mean, you've got a job of work, can I at least put it like that?

The President. Always have a lot of work, yes. I mean, nobody thought this was going to be easy. If it was easy, it would have been done. But I do think that we're going to be able to get serious negotiations back on track, and we're going to do everything we can because not only is it in the interests of the Palestinian people to have a state, it's in the interests of the Israeli people to stabilize the situation there, and it's in the interests of the United States that we've got two states living side by side in peace and security.

Israel-U.S. Relations/U.S. Foreign Policy

Mr. Webb. What George Bush senior did to concentrate the minds of the then-Israeli Government was freeze loan guarantees to Israel. Is there—I don't want to ask you about specifics, because, obviously, you don't want to say at this stage, but are there potentially sanctions, if I could put it like that, that you could employ, that you would consider employing against Israel if this Israeli Government doesn't do what you want it to do?

The President. I think that I've said my piece on this matter. We're going to continue negotiations. We think that it's early in the process, but we think we can make some progress.

Iran

Mr. Webb. What the Israelis say is that they have managed to persuade you at least to concentrate on Iran and to give what's—behind the scenes they're calling a bit of an ultimatum to the Iranians, that by the end of this year there must be some real progress.

The President. Well, the only thing I'd correct on that is I don't think the Israelis needed to convince me of that, since I've been talking

about it for the last 2 years. What I have said is that it is in the world's interests for Iran to set aside ambitions for a nuclear weapon, but that the best way to accomplish that is through tough, direct diplomacy.

Now—and what I was very clear about was that although I don't want to put artificial time tables on that process, we do want to make sure that by the end of this year we've actually seen a serious process move forward, and I think that we can measure whether or not the Iranians are serious.

My personal view is that the Islamic state of Iran has the potential to be a extraordinarily powerful and prosperous country. They are more likely to achieve that in the absence of nuclear weapons that could trigger a nuclear arms race in the region, not just responses from Israel, by the way, but potentially other states in the region—and that if what's preventing them from seeing that reality is 30 years of loggerheads between Iran and the United States, then this may be an opportunity for us to open the door and see if they walk through.

Now, there's no guarantees that they respond in a constructive way. That's part of what we need to test.

Iran/Nuclear Nonproliferation

Mr. Webb. A couple of former members of the National Security Council actually suggest that you should go further, though, and that Iran should be regarded in the same way as Japan, that, in other words, nuclear reprocessing should be accepted and monitored by the international community. Is that remotely possible?

The President. I think that the key right now is to initiate a process that is meaningful, that is rigorous between not only the United States and Iran bilaterally but also continuing with the P–5-plus-one discussions in a way that's constructive. What I—without going into specifics, what I do believe is that Iran has legitimate energy concerns, legitimate aspirations. On the other hand, the international community has a very real interest in preventing a nuclear arms race in the region. Now, one——

Mr. Webb. But could Iran have the right to reprocess energy?

The President. One point that I want to make is that in my speech in Prague, I talked about how we need to reinvigorate a much broader agenda for nuclear nonproliferation, including the United States and Russia drawing down our stockpiles in very significant ways.

To the extent that Iran feels that they are treated differently than everybody else that makes them embattled. To the extent that we're having a broader conversation about how all countries have an interest in containing and reducing over time the nuclear proliferation threat, that I think has to be part and parcel of our broader agenda.

Europe-U.S. Relations/U.S. Foreign Policy/National Security

Mr. Webb. You're going on to Europe, to Normandy, scene of a great ally coming together. Have you convinced European leaders, do you think, taking a sort of broad look at Europe as a whole, that it is necessary sometimes to use force to get your way in the world? And I'm thinking, obviously, particularly of Afghanistan, but almost in a wider sense, a kind of Venus and Mars issue. Are the Europeans going to be more onboard now to the American way of thinking?

The President. Well, look, I think any student of European history understands that the devastation of not just two World Wars but centuries of war across the Continent and across the Channel means that Europeans understand better than anybody the costs of war, and it is legitimate and understandable that they are hesitant. I think the United States has a similar attitude, that we should be thinking in terms of our national defense, not where can we initiate war.

We had an attack against the United States that killed 3,000 Americans. There have been multiple terrorist attacks planned, and some successfully executed, against European states. And at some point, we have to make sure that we are eliminating those networks that would—could do our citizens harm. That

is our first job as a state, as a Government, and——

Mr. Webb. And European leaders are onboard for that?

The President. And I think that they are onboard on that. Now, there are going to be tactical issues and strategies, and the politics of this can sometimes be difficult. Listen, the idea of U.S. troops in Afghanistan 7 years after 9/11—or 8 years after 9/11 is hardly popular. At some point, we have to make the case that it is necessary, and I think that, you know, what we tried to do with our strategic review was to give a broader framework of not just military but also diplomatic and development initiatives that would move in tandem with the military. And that framework, I think, is one that was heartily embraced by European leaders, by NATO. Now we've just got to execute, and execution is always tough, especially in a world recession where people are looking at their budgets.

The President's Leisure Activities

Mr. Webb. We're almost out of time, Mr. President. I wanted to finish by asking you just sort of a personal question. We've been through all these issues, and they must weigh on your mind constantly. How do you relax? What do you read? What do you—what does President Obama do?

The President. Well, nothing is better at pulling you out of your world than having a couple of children. So I've got a 10-year-old and a 7-year-old, and they're planning pool parties and talking about homework and trying to figure out how to get the dog back on the leash and——

Mr. Webb. And family life works in this way.

The President. And it really does. I mean, one of the huge benefits of being President is I now have this nice home office, and I go upstairs and I can have dinner with my family just about every night, and they can travel with me when they're able. And so we've got, I think, a very good deal, and I'm grateful that I've got such a wonderful wife and kids. That's my main form of relaxation.

Now, the—if I can get in a basketball game, or a round of golf, or I pick up a novel every once in a while, that doesn't hurt.

Mr. Webb. Are you reading anything at the moment?

The President. You know, I'm reading a book called "Netherland" by Joseph O'Neill—almost finished, excellent novel.

Mr. Webb. We'll let you get back to it. I'm sure you have other things to do before you go.

The President. Thank you so much.

Mr. Webb. Thank you very much, Mr. President.

The President. Appreciate it. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 3:34 p.m. in the Library at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel. Mr. Webb referred to Minister of Transportation and Road Safety Yisrael Katz of Israel; and former National Security Council staff members Flynt Leverett and Hillary Mann Leverett. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 2.

Interview With Laurence Haim of Canal Plus Television
June 1, 2009

Crash of Air France Flight 447

Ms. Haim. Bonjour, Mr. President.

The President. Bonjour.

Ms. Haim. Thank you so much to welcome Canal Plus on I-Television for this first interview granted to the French press.

The President. Thank you.

Ms. Haim. We really appreciate it. Before we begin today, there was a terrible tragedy in France with this plane. The French people are requesting assistance from the American people. Is there anything you wanted to say about it, sir?

The President. Well, obviously, we're heartbroken by the news, although we don't yet

know exactly what happened. Anytime there's an aviation problem, I think all of us are concerned.

The United States wants to provide every assistance possible in investigating what's happened. Obviously, until we know all the facts, I can't comment too much on the specifics. But I'm sure that those families who are waiting to find out what happened are going through a very difficult time right now, and my thoughts and prayers are with them.

The President's Visit to the Middle East

Ms. Haim. I'm sure they will appreciate that very much, sir. Thank you so much for them.

Tomorrow we're leaving for the Middle East. It's going to be your first trip there. What do you want to achieve with this trip?

The President. Well, we're going to be traveling to Saudi Arabia; I'll be having discussions with King Abdallah. And then we'll travel to Cairo, in which I am delivering on a promise I made during the campaign to provide a framework, a speech of how I think we can remake relations between the United States and countries in the Muslim world.

Now, I think it's very important to understand that one speech is not going to solve all the problems in the Middle East. And so I think expectations should be somewhat modest.

What I want to do is to create a better dialog so that the Muslim world understands more effectively how the United States but also how the West thinks about many of these difficult issues like terrorism, like democracy, to discuss the framework for what's happened in Iraq and Afghanistan and our outreach to Iran, and also how we view the prospects for peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

Now, the flip side is I think that the United States and the West generally, we have to educate ourselves more effectively on Islam. And one of the points I want to make is, is that if you actually took the number of Muslims Americans, we'd be one of the largest Muslim countries in the world. And so there's got to be a better dialog and a better understanding between the two peoples.

Combating Extremism in Muslim Countries

Ms. Haim. You're always speaking about dialog. How can you do that with the young people who sometimes are very tempted by extremists? Does you—as, you know, kind of a new President of the United States, what do you want to tell them, the young people?

The President. Well, you know, I think the most important thing I want to tell young people is that, regardless of your faith, those who build as opposed to those who destroy, I think, leave a lasting legacy, not only for themselves but also for their nations. And the impulse towards destruction as opposed to how can we study science and mathematics and restore the incredible scientific and knowledge, the output that came about during centuries of Islamic culture——

Ms. Haim. Do you think it's easy, Mr. President?

The President. ——I think that has to be lifted up. And you're seeing some countries, I think, that are making more investments in education. I think the importance of educating women has to be something that's emphasized; if you look at indicators of human development across the board, those where girls are getting a chance for an education end up being more economically productive. How to reconcile this with some of the traditional values and norms of Islam, that's not for me to dictate, but, certainly, I think it's something that can be accomplished, and I want to encourage that.

The President's Visit to the Middle East

Ms. Haim. When I met you on the campaign trail, you were telling me that you wanted to organize a Muslim summit. Do you still have that in mind?

The President. Well, you know, this is a start of what I think will be a long-term process. We'll have a speech; we'll have a roundtable discussion. It will give an opportunity, I think, for people around the world to engage in this discussion. It will be telecast in a wide variety of languages on our White House web site, whitehouse.gov. And my hope is, is that as a consequence you start seeing discussions not

just at the Presidential level, but at every level of public life. And I hope I can spark some dialog and debate within the Muslim world, because I think there's a real struggle right now between those who believe that Islam is irreconcilable to modern life and those who believe that, actually, Islam has always been able to move side by side with progress.

France-U.S. Relations

Ms. Haim. During this trip, you're going also to Germany and to France for the D-Day. How can you qualify the nature of the relationship between the French people and the American people, and also between the two Presidents?

The President. Well, I've had a wonderful relationship with President Sarkozy. And we had a wonderful visit when we were there the last time in Strasbourg. And this time I'm sure we'll have very productive bilateral relations.

France is one of the most important countries in the world and helps to set trends in how we deal with everything from climate change to the global recession. And President Sarkozy, I think, has been very courageous in some of the decisions that he's made: his willingness to stand very firm in the need to deal with Afghanistan; his encouragement of tough direct diplomacy with Iran. I think those are areas where he's shown excellent leadership. So I think the American people continue to love all things French and——

France

Ms. Haim. What do you love about France, if I may ask?

The President. Well, let's see. Okay, we got the food. We've got the—we've got Paris. We've got the south of France, Provence, the wine.

Ms. Haim. The wine? Did you go to Provence?

The President. You know, the—I have traveled through the south of France when I was in college. I haven't been back for a long time. And so I need to get back there.

Afghanistan

Ms. Haim. Just a serious question before the last one, because we don't have a lot of time. What do you expect from the French people, the French Government, about Afghanistan, precisely? Do you want them to have more troops?

The President. Well, I think we've put forward a framework, after having done a strategic review, of all the steps that need to be taken, not just militarily, but also diplomatically, as well as—in terms of development in Afghanistan. Our main goal is to have a Afghan Government that can deal with its security needs, but can assure that Afghanistan is not a safe haven. And if we can accomplish that, then we would love to get out of there as soon as possible.

In the meantime, there is going to need to be some military support for the elections, for basic security in many of these villages. We have provided a lot of troops. We expect all our NATO partners to contribute to that. But that's not the only contribution to make. We also need agricultural specialists. We need gendarmes to help train the police. We need people who understand water systems and electrical systems. So there's more than enough work to do, and I'm very pleased so far that the NATO community feels, I think, unified in the approach that we've put forward.

Message to Youth

Ms. Haim. Last question: You're loved by a lot of French people. They really see you as a model. What do you want again to say to the young people who are inspired by you and who are going through a very difficult time at this moment?

The President. Well, you know, I think that the main thing I always want to tell young people is that if they work hard and they aren't constrained by the status quo, by what has happened before, then they can remake the world. Now, I think that they have to do it in a responsible way.

I think—when I was young, certainly, I thought I could change the world overnight and that I didn't have to necessarily make all the sacrifices needed to do it, so nothing comes

easy. But transmitting to young people the sense that this is really their world for the making and that on issues like climate change or economic inequality or how do we deal with world health issues or how do we deal with conflict, that in all these areas, creating a more peaceful, prosperous world is up to them. That's what I want to encourage.

Ms. Haim. That's your dream, Mr. President?

The President. Yes.

French Language

Ms. Haim. Last question——

The President. You've already had a last question.

Ms. Haim. No, last question—[*laughter*]—a little one. Do you speak French? That's my last question.

The President. My French is terrible. I studied it in high school, and I just forgot it. Now, Michelle actually speaks a little French.

Ms. Haim. She's coming with you?

The President. She will be there. I'm not—I think she's definitely coming to Normandy with us. And then I think she may be staying in Paris for a few days.

Ms. Haim. Not one more in French, Mr. President. [*Laughter*]

The President. I need to work on my French.

Ms. Haim. Thank you so much. I really appreciate it. *Merci beaucoup*. It's a pleasure.

The President. Thank you so much.

Ms. Haim. Thank you. I appreciate it.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 3:50 p.m. in the Library at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia; and President Nicolas Sarkozy of France. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 2. A portion of this interview could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Interview With Michele Norris and Steve Inskeep of National Public Radio
June 1, 2009

U.S. Foreign Relations/Middle East Peace Process

Mr. Inskeep. Mr. President, welcome to the program.

The President. Thank you so much.

Ms. Norris. We're so glad you could join us, or we could join you, in this case. If you want to improve relations with the Muslim world, do you have to change or alter in some way the strong U.S. support for Israel?

The President. No, I don't think that we have to change strong U.S. support for Israel. I think that we do have to retain a constant belief in the possibilities of negotiations that will lead to peace, and that that's going to require, from my view, a two-state solution; that's going to require that each side, Israelis and Palestinians, meet their obligations.

I've said very clearly to the Israelis both privately and publicly that a freeze on settlements including natural growth is part of those obligations. I've said to the Palestinians that their continued progress on security and ending the incitement that, I think, understandably, makes Israelis so concerned—that has to be—those obligations have to be met.

So the key is to just believe that that process can move forward and that all sides are going to have to give. And it's not going to be an easy path, but one that I think we can achieve.

Israel

Mr. Inskeep. Mr. President, you mentioned a freeze on settlements. The Israel Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, is quoted today saying to Cabinet members in Israel that he will not follow your demand for a freeze on settlements in the West Bank, that it's not going to happen. What does it suggest that Israel is not taking your advice?

The President. Well, I think it's still early in the process. They formed a government, what, a month ago? I think that we're going to have a series of conversations. Obviously, the first

priority of a Israeli Prime Minister is to think in terms of Israel's security. I believe that strategically the status quo is unsustainable when it comes to Israeli security, that over time, in the absence of peace with the Palestinians, Israel will continue to be threatened militarily and will have enormous problems along its borders. And so it is not only in the Palestinians' interest to have a state, I believe that it is in the Israelis' as well, and in the United States interest as well.

Middle East Peace Process

Mr. Inskeep. But if the United States says for years that Israel should stop the settlements, and for years Israel simply does not, and the United States continues supporting Israel in roughly the same way, what does that do with American credibility in the Muslim world, which you're trying to address?

The President. Well, I think what is certainly true is that the United States has to follow through on what it says. Now, as I said before, I haven't said anything yet because it's early in the process. But it is important for us to be clear about what we believe will lead to peace and that there's not equivocation and there's not a sense that we expect only compromise on one side. It's going to have to be two-sided.

And I don't think anybody would deny that in theory. When it comes to the concrete, then the politics of it get difficult both within the Israeli and the Palestinian communities. But, look, if this was easy, it would have already been done.

Israel-U.S. Relations

Ms. Norris. Many people in the region are concerned. When they look at the U.S. relationship with Israel, they feel that Israel has favored status in all cases. And what do you say to people in the Muslim world who feel that the U.S. has repeatedly over time, blindly supported Israel?

The President. Well, what I'd say is there's no doubt that the United States has a special relationship with Israel. There are a lot of Israelis who used to be Americans. There is huge cross-cultural ties between the two countries. I think that as a vibrant democracy that shares many of our values, obviously, we're deeply sympathetic to Israel.

And I think I would also say that given past statements surrounding Israel, the notion that they should be driven into the sea, that they should be annihilated, that they should be obliterated, the armed aggression that's been directed towards them in the past, you can understand why not only Israelis would feel concern, but the United States would feel it was important to back this stalwart ally.

Now, having said all that, what is also true is that part of being a good friend is being honest, and I think there have been times where we are not as honest as we should be about the fact that the current direction, the current trajectory in the region is profoundly negative not only for Israeli interests, but also U.S. interests. And that's part of a new dialog that I'd like to see encouraged in the region.

U.S. Foreign Policy

Mr. Inskeep. Does it undermine your effort, reaching out to the Muslim world, which you'll do with the speech in Cairo, that you'll be speaking in a country with an undemocratic government that is an ally of the United States?

The President. Well, keep in mind, I already spoke in Turkey. They have a democracy that I'm sure some Turks would say has flaws to it, just as there are some Americans who would suggest there are flaws to American democracy.

Mr. Inskeep. Are you about to say Egypt is just a country with some flaws?

The President. No, no, what I'm about—never—don't put words in my mouth, Steve, especially not in the White House. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Inskeep. Just wondered where you're headed with that. [*Laughter*]

The President. You can wait until the postscript.

There is a wide range of governments throughout the Muslim world and the non-Muslim world, and the main thing for me to do is to project what our values are, what our ideals are, what we care most deeply about. And that is democracy, rule of law, freedom of speech, freedom of religion.

Now, in every country I deal with, whether it's China, Russia, ultimately Iran, Egypt, Saudi

Arabia, allies as well as non-allies, there are going to be some differences. And what I want to do is just maintain consistency in affirming what those values that I believe in are, understanding that we're not going to get countries to embrace various of our values simply by lecturing or through military means. We can't force these approaches. What we can do is stand up for human rights; we can stand up for democracy. But I think it's a mistake for us to somehow suggest that we're not going to deal with countries around the world in the absence of their meeting all our criteria for democracy.

Mr. Inskeep. Michele Norris.

Hizballah and Hamas

Ms. Norris. You've mentioned many times the importance of reaching out to Iran with an open hand, trying to engage that country. Are you also willing to try to engage with Hizballah or Hamas, entities that have now had significant gains in recent elections?

The President. Well, let's just underscore a point here. Iran is a huge, significant nation-state that has, I think, across the international community been recognized as such. Hizballah and Hamas are not. And I don't think that we have to approach those entities in the same way. In the——

Ms. Norris. If I may ask though, does that change with their electoral gains?

The President. Well, look, if at some point Lebanon is a member of the United Nations, if at some point they are elected as a head of state, or a head of state is elected in Lebanon that is a member of that organization, then that would raise these issues. That hasn't happened yet.

With respect to Hamas, I do think that if they recognize the Quartet principles that have been laid out—and these are fairly modest conditions here—that you recognize the State of Israel without prejudging what various grievances or claims are appropriate, that you abide by previous agreements, that you renounce violence as a means of achieving your goals, then I think the discussions with Hamas could potentially proceed.

And so the problem has been that there's been a preference oftentimes on the part of these organizations to use violence and not take responsibility for governance as a means of winning propaganda wars or advancing their organizational aims. At some point, though, they may make a transition. There are examples of, in the past, of organizations that have successfully transitioned from violent organizations to ones that recognize that they can achieve their aims more effectively through political means, and I hope that occurs.

Iran/Nuclear Nonproliferation

Mr. Inskeep. Mr. President, because you mentioned Iran, I want to ask a question about that and about your efforts to engage with the Muslim world in a different way. I'd like to know which development you think would be more harmful to America's prestige in the Muslim world, which is worse: an Iranian Government that has nuclear weapons, or an Israeli military strike on Iranian nuclear facilities?

The President. Well, I'm not going to engage in these hypotheticals, Steve, but I can tell you that my view is that Iran possessing a nuclear weapon would be profoundly destabilizing to the region, not just with respect to Israel's response, but the response of other Arab States in the region or Muslim states in the region that might be concerned about Iran having an undue advantage.

More broadly, I've got a concern about nuclear proliferation generally, something that I talked about in my speech in Prague. I think one of the things that we need to do is to describe to the Iranians a pathway for them achieving security, respect, and prosperity that doesn't involve them possessing a nuclear weapon. But we have to be able to make that same argument to other countries that might aspire to nuclear weapons, and we have to apply some of those same principles to ourselves, so that—for example, I'll be traveling next month to Moscow to initiate START talks, trying to reduce our nuclear stockpiles, as part of a broader effort in the international community to contain our nuclear weapons.

Mr. Inskeep. And would you urge other nations to restrain themselves until you can complete that process?

The President. Well, that's going to be the challenge. That's why we're so busy around here all the time.

Afghanistan

Mr. Inskeep. Let me ask about one other challenge, if I might. Forgive me, Michele, go ahead.

Ms. Norris. No, go ahead.

Mr. Inskeep. Is your effort to engage the Muslim world likely to be complicated or even undermined by the fact that you're escalating a war in a Muslim country, Afghanistan, with the inevitable civilian casualties and other bad news that will come out of that?

The President. Well, there's no doubt that anytime you have civilian casualties that always complicates things, whether it was a Muslim or a non-Muslim country. I think part of what I'll be addressing in my speech is a reminder that the reason we're in Afghanistan is very simple, and that is 3,000 Americans were killed, and you had a devastating attack on the American homeland. The organization that planned those attacks intends to carry out further attacks, and we cannot stand by and allow that to happen.

But I am somebody who is very anxious to have the Afghan Government and the Pakistani Government have the capacity to ensure that those safe havens don't exist. And so it's—I think will be an important reminder that we have no territorial ambitions in Afghanistan. We don't have an interest in exploiting the resources of Afghanistan. What we want is simply that people aren't hanging out in Afghanistan who are plotting to bomb the United States. And I think that's a fairly modest goal that other Muslim countries should be able to understand.

Former Vice President Dick Cheney/U.S. Foreign Policy/National Security

Ms. Norris. Mr. President, you have talked about creating a new path forward on Guantanamo, on the relationship that the U.S. has with countries in the Muslim world, and on several fronts. But at the same time, the former Vice President has been out talking about the policies in the former administration. He's forceful; he's unapologetic; and he doesn't seem willing to scale back his rhetoric. How much does that undermine or complicate your effort to extend a hand, to explain the Obama doctrine, and draw a line of demarcation between that administration and yours?

The President. Well, he also happens to be wrong, right? And last time, immediately after his speech, I think there was a fact check on his speech that didn't get a very good grade.

Does it make it more complicated? No, because I think these are complicated issues and there is a legitimate debate to be had about national security. And I don't doubt the sincerity of the former Vice President or the previous administration in wanting to protect the American people. And these are very difficult decisions. If you've got a—as I said in my speech, if you've got a organization that is out to kill Americans and is not bound by any rules, then that puts an enormous strain on not only our intelligence operations, our national security operations, but also our legal system.

The one thing that I'm absolutely persuaded by, though, is that if we are true to our ideals and our values, if these decisions aren't made unilaterally by the executive branch, but rather in consultation and in open fashion and in democratic debate, that the Muslim world and the world generally will see that we have upheld our values, been true to our ideals, and that ultimately will make us safer.

Ms. Norris. It's unusual for the debate to be playing out in a public forum, though. Have you picked up the phone? Have you talked to him? Have you had a conversation?

The President. Oh, I don't think it's that unusual. As I remember, there were some speeches given by Vice President Gore that differed with President Bush's policies. And I think that's healthy; that's part of the debate. And I don't in any way begrudge, I think, anybody in debating, sometimes ferociously, these issues that are of premium importance to the United States. And I am constantly listening and gauging whether or not there's new information out there that I should take into account.

I will tell you that based on my reviews, I am very confident about the policies that we've taken being the right ones for the American people.

Mr. Inskeep. We're told that our time is up. So you've been very generous.

The President. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 4:02 p.m. in the Library at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 2.

Remarks on the Nomination of Representative John M. McHugh To Be Secretary of the Army
June 2, 2009

Good afternoon, everybody. As President and Commander in Chief, I have no greater responsibility than the security of the American people. And keeping the American people safe demands keeping our Armed Forces strong: the soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coast guardsmen who bear the burden of America's defense.

Few have borne a heavier burden in recent years than America's Army: the soldiers, active, guard, and reserve, who have deployed multiple times to Afghanistan and Iraq; the thousands who have given life or limb, or our wounded warriors, like those I'll be visiting this week in Germany, and the spouses and children, the heroes back home, like those my wife Michelle has visited at Fort Bragg and around the country; and the veterans we honor still, like the heroes of D-Day who we'll remember this week in Normandy.

As a nation, we have a sacred trust with all those who wear the uniform to always take care of them as they take care of us. And that's why my administration is increasing funding for our military, including the Army, and increasing the size of the Army 2 years ahead of schedule. That's why we're investing in the equipment our forces need today, including the additional Army helicopters and crews urgently needed in Afghanistan. That's why we're investing in the new capabilities demanded by 21st century missions. And that's why we're increasing support to soldiers and families, increasing pay, investing $1.7 billion in Army family programs, and making historic investments to improve care for our wounded warriors and veterans.

And today I'm proud to announce the distinguished public servant who will help keep us safe and keep our sacred trust with our soldiers and their families, the next Secretary of the Army, the ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee, John McHugh.

Through more than 30 years of public service at the local, State, and national level, John has proven himself a dedicated representative of the people of northern New York. But it is his service over the past 16 years in Congress as a champion of our men and women in uniform that uniquely qualifies him to help lead America's Army.

John understands personally and deeply the sacrifices that our soldiers and their families make every day. Just ask the soldiers he's always fought for in his district at Fort Drum, home to the legendary 10th Mountain Division, the most deployed division in the U.S. Army, or ask the soldiers he's visited on his many trips to Iraq and Afghanistan.

John is committed to keeping America's Army the best-trained, the best-equipped, the best-led land force the world has ever seen. He has been a member of the Armed Services Committee for 16 years. He has been a cochair of the House Army Caucus for 14 years. He served as ranking member of the Military Personnel Subcommittee. As Secretary of the Army, he will ensure that our soldiers are trained and equipped to meet the full spectrum of challenges and threats of our time, the conventional and the unconventional, the nation-state and the terrorist network.

John understands that confronting these challenges also requires something else. He

served on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and three of its key subcommittees. He knows that we—when we send our forces into harm's way, they need the best, most accurate intelligence to protect our soldiers and advance our interests.

At the same time, John knows that we must reform the way the Pentagon and the Army does business. Along with Senators Carl Levin and John McCain and Representative Ike Skelton, he played a leading role in passing the landmark Weapons System Acquisition Reform Act, which I signed into law 2 weeks ago. As Secretary, he will help lead our efforts to save taxpayers billions of dollars and equip our soldiers with the weapons they need on time and on budget.

Most importantly, John understands that the Army's greatest strength is its people. He served for many years on the board of visitors of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. He's been honored by our soldiers and their families for his efforts to increase their readiness, health care, and quality of life. As Secretary, he will ensure that America keeps faith with our soldiers, increasing their pay, increasing childcare, and helping families deal with the stress and strain of war.

Finally, John shares my belief that a sustainable national security strategy must include a bipartisan consensus at home. He hasn't agreed with every decision my administration has made, but he brings patriotism and a pragmatism that has won him respect on both sides of the aisle.

I should note that this patriotism runs in the McHugh family. During World War II, John's father served with distinction on a B–17 bomber, his mother cared for wounded GIs through the Nurses Corps.

I know giving up his seat in Congress after nine terms will require a sacrifice both for John and his constituents, but I also know that he is more than ready to carry on his family's tradition of service and to write the next great chapter of his own service to his country. And I know that the Army and America will be stronger for it.

With that, I'd like to invite John to say a few words.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:56 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Rep. McHugh.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Senate Democrats To Discuss Health Care Reform and an Exchange With Reporters
June 2, 2009

The President. I want to—thanks—I want to say thank you to all of my former colleagues for taking the time to visit here today at the White House. I want to particularly thank Senators Baucus, Senator Dodd, all the Senators who have been fighting tirelessly on behalf of health care reform, for many years in some cases.

I want to mention, by the way, that I spoke to Senator Kennedy earlier this morning. He is gung-ho, ready to go. He had a whole range of ideas in terms of about how he'd like to see this move, and he's grateful that Chris has been taking on a lot of the work in the health committee, but he is very enthusiastic about our progress.

This issue, health care reform, is not a luxury. It's not something that I want to do because of campaign promises or politics. This is a necessity. This is something that has to be done. We cannot avoid bringing about change in our health care system. Soaring health care costs are unsustainable for families, they are unsustainable for businesses, and they are unsustainable for governments, both at the Federal, State, and local levels.

All across the system, what you are seeing are skyrocketing premiums; you are seeing people who are getting caught up in loopholes and end up not having coverage that they thought they had. We have a system here in the United States which is spending more money per capita than just about any other industrialized or

advanced nation, and yet we're actually seeing worse health care outcomes in many cases.

And to give you a sense of what we're looking at down the road if we don't initiate serious reform, one-fifth of our economy is projected to be tied up in our health care system in 10 years—one-fifth. Millions more Americans are expected to go without health insurance if we don't initiate reform right now, and outside of what they're receiving for health care, workers are projected to see their take-home pay actually decrease if we don't get a handle on this.

So we can't afford to put this off, and the dedicated public servants who are gathered here today understand that, and they are ready to get going. And this window between now and the August recess, I think, is going to be the make-or-break period. This is the time where we've got to get this done.

I want to just make mention of something that I've talked to many of you privately about. I want to say this publicly. As we move forward on health care reform, it is not sufficient for us simply to add more people to Medicare or Medicaid, to increase the rolls, to increase coverage in the absence of cost controls and reform. And let me repeat this principle: If we don't get control over costs, then it is going to be very difficult for us to expand coverage. These two things have to go hand in hand. Another way of putting it is, we can't simply put more people into a broken system that doesn't work.

So we've got to reform the underlying system. And this means promoting best practices not just the most expensive practices. And one of the things I'm going to be discussing with the Health and the Finance Committees is how can we change incentive structures so that, for example, places like Mayo Clinic in Minnesota are able to provide some of the best health care services in the country at half or sometimes even less of the costs than some other areas where the quality is not as good. What we should be—and by the way, that's not just unique to Mayo; the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio, same thing, top-notch quality, lower costs.

What we've got to figure out is how do we create the incentives in terms of how we reimburse, how we deal with getting doctors to work together more effectively, how we're working on prevention and wellness so that we're driving down costs across the board.

Now, I appreciate the efforts that are being made by these Senators. I look forward to discussing with them their ideas. This is going to be a heavy lift, I think everybody understands that, but I'm also confident that people want to get this done this year. And under the leadership of Max and Chris and all the other participants here, I'm confident that we're going to get it done.

So thank you very much, everybody. And now we're going to get to work.

The President's Upcoming Visit to Egypt

Q. Mr. President, how's that Cairo speech?

The President. We'll find out in Cairo. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:31 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Remarks on Signing the Ronald Reagan Centennial Commission Act
June 2, 2009

The President. Well, thank you all for coming to the White House today as we commemorate the life and work of a President in the president—in the presence of those who loved him and knew him and respected him deeply as both a leader and as a man.

And in particular, I want to thank our special guest here today, Nancy Reagan, our former First Lady, who redefined that role in her time at the White House, and who has, in the many years since, taken on a new role as an advocate on behalf of treatments that hold the promise of improving and saving lives. And I should just add, she has been extraordinarily gracious to both me and Michelle during our transition here, and I'm thankful for that.

There are few who are not moved by the love that Ms. Reagan felt for her husband, and fewer still who are not inspired by how this love led her to take up the twin causes of stem cell research and Alzheimer's research. In saying a long goodbye, Nancy Reagan became a voice on behalf of millions of families experiencing the depleting, aching reality of Alzheimer's disease.

I'd also like to recognize the Members of Congress who are standing alongside us, who worked so hard to pass the Ronald Reagan Centennial Commission Act, particularly Congressman Elton Gallegly, the lead sponsor of this bill. Finally, I want to thank the trustees of the Reagan Foundation who are here today as well.

This legislation, approved by an overwhelming bipartisan majority in the House of Representatives and passed unanimously in the Senate, will create a commission to honor President Reagan on the 100th anniversary of his birth, and I am proud to sign it into law.

President Reagan understood that while there are often strong disagreements between parties and political adversaries—disagreements that can be a source of conflict and bitterness—it is important to keep in mind all that we share. For all of the deepest of divides that exist in America, the bonds that bring us together are that much stronger. Now, we may see the world differently, but we must never stop seeing one another as fellow Americans and as patriots who want what is best for the country that we love.

Now, this Nation was built on the basis of the principle that we are stronger, not weaker, for even the most vigorous debates, debates that have energized our politics since the inventors of America argued over our founding documents more than two centuries ago. Through the weighing of different views, we take measure of where we stand and where we must go, and the moment we fail to recognize the good in those with whom we quarrel is the moment that we've lost sight of who we are as a people.

President Reagan helped as much as any President to restore a sense of optimism in our country, a spirit that transcended politics, that transcended even the most heated arguments of the day. It was this optimism that allowed leaders like the President and Speaker Tip O'Neill, who held sharply different philosophies, to sit down together at the end of difficult debates as friends and to work with one another on complex and contentious issues like Social Security. It was this optimism that the American people sorely needed during a difficult period, a period of economic and global challenges that tested us in unprecedented ways.

In these perilous times, President Reagan had the ability to communicate directly and movingly to the American people, to understand both the hardships they felt in their lives and the hopes that they had for their country. That was powerful, that was important, and we are better off for the extraordinary leadership that he showed.

So I'm glad to have all of you here today. I'm especially glad to have Mrs. Reagan here today as we sign this bill. I'll look forward to seeing the fruits of this commission's work, culminating in the celebration of President Reagan's life on the occasion of his 100th birthday.

And on that morning in America, we can be proud to come together as one nation and one people to honor a leader who loved this country and wanted nothing more than to see its promise fulfilled.

So thank you all very much. God bless you. God bless the United States of America. Ms. Reagan, let's go sign this bill.

[*At this point, the President signed the bill.*]

The President. I've gotten good at this. Although, I think that President Reagan's signature was more legible than mine. [*Laughter*] All right, there you go.

Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:51 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. H.R. 131, approved June 2, was assigned Public Law No. 111–25.

Statement on Signing the Ronald Reagan Centennial Commission Act
June 2, 2009

Today I am pleased today to sign into law, H.R. 131, which will create a Ronald Reagan Centennial Commission with the responsibility to plan, develop, and carry out activities to honor Ronald Reagan on the 100th anniversary of his birth. It is fitting that the life of our 40th President be commemorated on this occasion. The bill provides that the Commission will be composed of the Secretary of the Interior, four individuals whom I will appoint after considering the recommendations of the Board of Trustees of the Ronald Reagan Foundation, and six members of Congress appointed by the congressional leadership. I wholeheartedly welcome the participation of members of Congress in the activities of the Commission. In accord with President Reagan's Signing Statement made upon signing similar commemorative legislation in 1983, I understand, and my Administration has so advised the Congress, that the members of Congress "will be able to participate only in ceremonial or advisory functions of [*such a*] Commission, and not in matters involving the administration of the act" in light of the separation of powers and the Appointments and Ineligibility Clauses of the Constitution (Public Papers of the President, Ronald Reagan, Vol. II, 1983, page 1390).

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 2, 2009.

NOTE: H.R. 131, approved June 2, was assigned Public Law No. 111–25.

Statement on a Meeting With House Democratic Leaders
June 2, 2009

Speaker Pelosi, Leader Hoyer, and I had a very productive discussion this afternoon about some of the major issues before Congress. The House of Representatives has a very busy legislative schedule ahead of them, and I am grateful for the leadership they are providing on our major priorities, including health care reform, energy reform, and restoring fiscal discipline.

Letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives Transmitting a Supplemental Budget Request
June 2, 2009

Dear Madam Speaker:

On April 30, I wrote to you to request funding for the 2009 H1N1 flu outbreak. Since this request, we have learned much about the outbreak and the level of national response that possibly could be necessary in the coming months. There also remains much uncertainty about the outbreak and its potential to return during the upcoming flu season in the United States.

Out of an abundance of caution, I ask the Congress to consider an additional and contingent request for $2 billion and other authorities to enhance our Nation's capability to respond to the potential spread of this outbreak. These funds should be provided with maximum flexibility to allow us to address this emerging situation.

The proposal also includes an additional $200 million to address the serious humanitarian crisis developing in Pakistan. To date, there are over 2.5 million displaced people in Pakistan, many of whom have fled their homes because of the Pakistani government's

counterinsurgency campaign. These funds will provide displaced people in Pakistan with urgent relief and resettlement assistance.

As the House of Representatives and Senate move forward to conference different versions of the FY 2009 Supplemental Appropriations bill, I urge the Congress to act expeditiously in considering this important request, the details of which are set forth in the enclosed letter from the Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

Letter to Senate Democratic Leaders on Health Care Reform
June 2, 2009

Dear Senator:

The meeting that we held today was very productive and I want to commend you for your leadership—and the hard work your Committees are doing on health care reform, one of the most urgent and important challenges confronting us as a Nation.

In 2009, health care reform is not a luxury. It's a necessity we cannot defer. Soaring health care costs make our current course unsustainable. It is unsustainable for our families, whose spiraling premiums and out-of-pocket expenses are pushing them into bankruptcy and forcing them to go without the checkups and prescriptions they need. It is unsustainable for businesses, forcing more and more of them to choose between keeping their doors open or covering their workers. And the ever-increasing cost of Medicare and Medicaid are among the main drivers of enormous budget deficits that are threatening our economic future.

In short, the status quo is broken, and pouring money into a broken system only perpetuates its inefficiencies. Doing nothing would only put our entire health care system at risk. Without meaningful reform, one fifth of our economy is projected to be tied up in our health care system in 10 years; millions more Americans are expected to go without insurance; and outside of what they are receiving for health care, workers are projected to see their take-home pay actually fall over time.

We simply cannot afford to postpone health care reform any longer. This recognition has led an unprecedented coalition to emerge on behalf of reform—hospitals, physicians, and health insurers, labor and business, Democrats and Republicans. These groups, adversaries in past efforts, are now standing as partners on the same side of this debate.

At this historic juncture, we share the goal of quality, affordable health care for all Americans. But I want to stress that reform cannot mean focusing on expanded coverage alone. Indeed, without a serious, sustained effort to reduce the growth rate of health care costs, affordable health care coverage will remain out of reach. So we must attack the root causes of the inflation in health care. That means promoting the best practices, not simply the most expensive. We should ask why places like the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota, the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio, and other institutions can offer the highest quality care at costs well below the national norm. We need to learn from their successes and replicate those best practices across our country. That's how we can achieve reform that preserves and strengthens what's best about our health care system, while fixing what is broken.

The plans you are discussing embody my core belief that Americans should have better choices for health insurance, building on the principle that if they like the coverage they have now, they can keep it, while seeing their costs lowered as our reforms take hold. But for those who don't have such options, I agree that we should create a health insurance exchange—a market where Americans can one-stop shop for a health care plan, compare benefits and prices, and choose the plan that's best for them, in the same way that Members of Congress and their families can. None of these plans should deny coverage on the basis of a preexisting condition, and all of these plans should include an affordable basic benefit package that includes

prevention, and protection against catastrophic costs. I strongly believe that Americans should have the choice of a public health insurance option operating alongside private plans. This will give them a better range of choices, make the health care market more competitive, and keep insurance companies honest.

I understand the Committees are moving towards a principle of shared responsibility—making every American responsible for having health insurance coverage, and asking that employers share in the cost. I share the goal of ending lapses and gaps in coverage that make us less healthy and drive up everyone's costs, and I am open to your ideas on shared responsibility. But I believe if we are going to make people responsible for owning health insurance, we must make health care affordable. If we do end up with a system where people are responsible for their own insurance, we need to provide a hardship waiver to exempt Americans who cannot afford it. In addition, while I believe that employers have a responsibility to support health insurance for their employees, small businesses face a number of special challenges in affording health benefits and should be exempted.

Health care reform must not add to our deficits over the next 10 years—it must be at least deficit neutral and put America on a path to reducing its deficit over time. To fulfill this promise, I have set aside $635 billion in a health reserve fund as a down payment on reform. This reserve fund includes a number of proposals to cut spending by $309 billion over 10 years—reducing overpayments to Medicare Advantage private insurers; strengthening Medicare and Medicaid payment accuracy by cutting waste, fraud and abuse; improving care for Medicare patients after hospitalizations; and encouraging physicians to form "accountable care organizations" to improve the quality of care for Medicare patients. The reserve fund also includes a proposal to limit the tax rate at which high-income taxpayers can take itemized deductions to 28 percent, which, together with other steps to close loopholes, would raise $326 billion over 10 years.

I am committed to working with the Congress to fully offset the cost of health care reform by reducing Medicare and Medicaid spending by another $200 to $300 billion over the next 10 years, and by enacting appropriate proposals to generate additional revenues. These savings will come not only by adopting new technologies and addressing the vastly different costs of care, but from going after the key drivers of skyrocketing health care costs, including unmanaged chronic diseases, duplicated tests, and unnecessary hospital readmissions.

To identify and achieve additional savings, I am also open to your ideas about giving special consideration to the recommendations of the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission (MedPAC), a commission created by a Republican Congress. Under this approach, MedPAC's recommendations on cost reductions would be adopted unless opposed by a joint resolution of the Congress. This is similar to a process that has been used effectively by a commission charged with closing military bases, and could be a valuable tool to help achieve health care reform in a fiscally responsible way.

These are some of the issues I look forward to discussing with you in greater detail in the weeks and months ahead. But this year, we must do more than discuss. We must act. The American people and America's future demand it.

I know that you have reached out to Republican colleagues, as I have, and that you have worked hard to reach a bipartisan consensus about many of these issues. I remain hopeful that many Republicans will join us in enacting this historic legislation that will lower health care costs for families, businesses, and governments, and improve the lives of millions of Americans. So I appreciate your efforts, and look forward to working with you so that the Congress can complete health care reform by October.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Sens. Edward M. Kennedy and Max S. Baucus. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 3. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
June 3, 2009

The President's Visit to Saudi Arabia

Q. Mr. President, what's your message, sir, here?

President Obama. This is my first visit to Saudi Arabia, but I've had several conversations with His Majesty, and I've been struck by his wisdom and his graciousness. Obviously, the United States and Saudi Arabia have a long history of friendship; we have a strategic relationship. And as I take this trip, and we'll be visiting Cairo tomorrow, I thought it was very important to come to the place where Islam began and to seek His Majesty's counsel and to discuss with him many of the issues that we confront here in the Middle East.

So I just want to again thank him for his extraordinary generosity and hospitality. And I'm confident that working together the United States and Saudi Arabia can make progress on a whole host of issues and mutual interests.

King Abdallah. I thank you, Mr. President, for the kind words and the kind sentiments expressed within them. I am not surprised, given the historic and strategic ties between our two countries, I believe, that go back to the time of the meeting between the late Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the late King Abdul Aziz.

I also want to express my best wishes to the friendly American people who are represented by a distinguished man who deserves to be in this position.

President Obama. Shukran.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:22 p.m. at the King's Royal Farm. King Abdallah spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on Arms Control and Nuclear Nonproliferation
June 3, 2009

I welcome Senator McCain's important statement on President Reagan's legacy and the need to move toward a world free of nuclear weapons. In my speech in Prague, I outlined my agenda for keeping the American people safe from the dangers posed by nuclear weapons, and I am grateful to John McCain for his leadership on these critical issues. I have outlined an ambitious strategy for promoting arms control and preventing nuclear terrorism and proliferation, which is already bearing fruit. I look forward to working with Senator McCain and the entire Congress to ensure that we accomplish these goals together for the American people and the security of the entire planet.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt in Cairo, Egypt
June 4, 2009

President Mubarak. I'd like to welcome President Obama to Egypt. This is his first—our first meeting together. We discussed so many issues: the Middle East issues, interests in the

region. We also discussed all problems here in the region, the situation and everything related to Iran and to the region.

I repeat welcoming Mr. Obama. We discussed everything candidly and frankly, without any reservation, but there are other meetings that will take place later, either in the United States of America or anywhere else.

Thank you very much.

President Obama. Well, I just want to thank President Mubarak as well as the people of Egypt for their wonderful hospitality. I'm very much looking forward to speaking at the university this afternoon. I wanted to first sit down with President Mubarak, who, obviously, has decades of experience on a whole range of issues.

As the President has indicated, we discussed the situation with Israel and the Palestinians. We discussed how we can move forward in a constructive way that brings about peace and prosperity for all people in the region. And I emphasized to him that America is committed to working in partnership with the countries in the region so that all people can meet their aspirations.

And I'm very much looking forward in the months and years to come to continuing to consult with the President. And I've communicated to him, and I want to communicate to the Egyptian people, our greetings from America.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:29 a.m. in Quba Palace. President Mubarak spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks in Cairo
June 4, 2009

The President. Thank you so much. Good afternoon. I am honored to be in the timeless city of Cairo and to be hosted by two remarkable institutions. For over a thousand years, Al-Azhar has stood as a beacon of Islamic learning, and for over a century, Cairo University has been a source of Egypt's advancement. And together, you represent the harmony between tradition and progress. I'm grateful for your hospitality and the hospitality of the people of Egypt. And I'm also proud to carry with me the good will of the American people and a greeting of peace from Muslim communities in my country: *As-salaamu alaykum*.

We meet at a time of great tension between the United States and Muslims around the world, tension rooted in historical forces that go beyond any current policy debate. The relationship between Islam and the West includes centuries of coexistence and cooperation, but also conflict and religious wars. More recently, tension has been fed by colonialism that denied rights and opportunities to many Muslims and a cold war in which Muslim-majority countries were too often treated as proxies without regard to their own aspirations. Moreover, the sweeping change brought by modernity and globalization led many Muslims to view the West as hostile to the traditions of Islam.

Violent extremists have exploited these tensions in a small, but potent minority of Muslims. The attacks of September 11, 2001, and the continued efforts of these extremists to engage in violence against civilians has led some in my country to view Islam as inevitably hostile not only to America and Western countries, but also to human rights. All this has bred more fear and more mistrust.

So long as our relationship is defined by our differences, we will empower those who sow hatred rather than peace, those who promote conflict rather than the cooperation that can help all of our people achieve justice and prosperity. And this cycle of suspicion and discord must end.

I've come here to Cairo to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world, one based on mutual interest and mutual respect and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive and need not be in

competition. Instead, they overlap and share common principles, principles of justice and progress, tolerance and the dignity of all human beings.

I do so recognizing that change cannot happen overnight. I know there's been a lot of publicity about this speech, but no single speech can eradicate years of mistrust. Nor can I answer in the time that I have this afternoon all the complex questions that brought us to this point. But I am convinced that in order to move forward, we must say openly to each other the things we hold in our hearts and that too often are said only behind closed doors. There must be a sustained effort to listen to each other, to learn from each other, to respect one another, and to seek common ground. As the Holy Koran tells us: "Be conscious of God and speak always the truth." That is what I will try to do today, to speak the truth as best I can, humbled by the task before us and firm in my belief that the interests we share as human beings are far more powerful than the forces that drive us apart.

Now part of this conviction is rooted in my own experience. I'm a Christian, but my father came from a Kenyan family that includes generations of Muslims. As a boy, I spent several years in Indonesia and heard the call of the *azaan* at the break of dawn and at the fall of dusk. As a young man, I worked in Chicago communities where many found dignity and peace in their Muslim faith. As a student of history, I also know civilization's debt to Islam.

It was Islam, at places like Al-Azhar, that carried the light of learning through so many centuries, paving the way for Europe's renaissance and enlightenment. It was innovation in Muslim communities that developed the order of algebra, our magnetic compass and tools of navigation, our mastery of pens and printing, our understanding of how disease spreads and how it can be healed. Islamic culture has given us majestic arches and soaring spires, timeless poetry and cherished music, elegant calligraphy and places of peaceful contemplation. And throughout history, Islam has demonstrated through words and deeds the possibilities of religious tolerance and racial equality.

I also know that Islam has always been a part of America's story. The first nation to recognize my country was Morocco. In signing the Treaty of Tripoli in 1796, our second President, John Adams, wrote: "The United States has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion, or tranquillity of Muslims." And since our founding, American Muslims have enriched the United States. They have fought in our wars; they have served in our government; they have stood for civil rights; they have started businesses; they have taught at our universities; they've excelled in our sports arenas; they've won Nobel Prizes, built our tallest building, and lit the Olympic Torch. And when the first Muslim American was recently elected to Congress, he took the oath to defend our Constitution using the same Holy Koran that one of our Founding Fathers, Thomas Jefferson, kept in his personal library.

So I have known Islam on three continents before coming to the region where it was first revealed. That experience guides my conviction that partnership between America and Islam must be based on what Islam is, not what it isn't. And I consider it part of my responsibility as President of the United States to fight against negative stereotypes of Islam wherever they appear.

But that same principle must apply to Muslim perceptions of America. Just as Muslims do not fit a crude stereotype, America is not the crude stereotype of a self-interested empire. The United States has been one of the greatest sources of progress that the world has ever known. We were born out of revolution against an empire. We were founded upon the ideal that all are created equal, and we have shed blood and struggled for centuries to give meaning to those words, within our borders and around the world. We are shaped by every culture, drawn from every end of the Earth, and dedicated to a simple concept: *E pluribus unum*—"Out of many, one."

Now, much has been made of the fact that an African American with the name Barack Hussein Obama could be elected President. But my personal story is not so unique. The dream of opportunity for all people has not come true for everyone in America, but its promise exists for

all who come to our shores, and that includes nearly 7 million American Muslims in our country today, who, by the way, enjoy incomes and educational levels that are higher than the American average.

Moreover, freedom in America is indivisible from the freedom to practice one's religion. That is why there is a mosque in every State in our Union and over 1,200 mosques within our borders. That's why the United States Government has gone to court to protect the right of women and girls to wear the *hijab* and to punish those who would deny it.

So let there be no doubt, Islam is a part of America. And I believe that America holds within her the truth that regardless of race, religion, or station in life, all of us share common aspirations to live in peace and security, to get an education and to work with dignity, to love our families, our communities, and our God. These things we share. This is the hope of all humanity.

Of course, recognizing our common humanity is only the beginning of our task. Words alone cannot meet the needs of our people. These needs will be met only if we act boldly in the years ahead and if we understand that the challenges we face are shared and our failure to meet them will hurt us all. For we have learned from recent experience that when a financial system weakens in one country, prosperity is hurt everywhere. When a new flu infects one human being, all are at risk. When one nation pursues a nuclear weapon, the risk of nuclear attack rises for all nations. When violent extremists operate in one stretch of mountains, people are endangered across an ocean. When innocents in Bosnia and Darfur are slaughtered, that is a stain on our collective conscience. That is what it means to share this world in the 21st century. That is the responsibility we have to one another as human beings.

And this is a difficult responsibility to embrace, for human history has often been a record of nations and tribes and, yes, religions subjugating one another in pursuit of their own interests. Yet in this new age, such attitudes are self-defeating. Given our interdependence, any world order that elevates one nation or group of people over another will inevitably fail. So whatever we think of the past, we must not be prisoners to it. Our problems must be dealt with through partnership; our progress must be shared.

Now, that does not mean we should ignore sources of tension. Indeed, it suggests the opposite. We must face these tensions squarely. And so in that spirit, let me speak as clearly and as plainly as I can about some specific issues that I believe we must finally confront together.

The first issue that we have to confront is violent extremism in all of its forms. In Ankara, I made clear that America is not, and never will be, at war with Islam. We will, however, relentlessly confront violent extremists who pose a grave threat to our security, because we reject the same thing that people of all faiths reject: the killing of innocent men, women, and children. And it is my first duty as President to protect the American people.

The situation in Afghanistan demonstrates America's goals and our need to work together. Over 7 years ago, the United States pursued Al Qaida and the Taliban with broad international support. We did not go by choice; we went because of necessity. I'm aware that there's still some who would question or even justify the events of 9/11. But let us be clear: Al Qaida killed nearly 3,000 people on that day. The victims were innocent men, women, and children from America and many other nations who had done nothing to harm anybody. And yet, Al Qaida chose to ruthlessly murder these people, claimed credit for the attack, and even now states their determination to kill on a massive scale. They have affiliates in many countries and are trying to expand their reach. These are not opinions to be debated; these are facts to be dealt with.

Make no mistake, we do not want to keep our troops in Afghanistan. We see no—we seek no military bases there. It is agonizing for America to lose our young men and women. It is costly and politically difficult to continue this conflict. We would gladly bring every single one of our troops home, if we could be confident that there were not violent extremists in Afghanistan and now Pakistan

determined to kill as many Americans as they possibly can. But that is not yet the case.

And that's why we're partnering with a coalition of 46 countries. And despite the costs involved, America's commitment will not weaken. Indeed, none of us should tolerate these extremists. They have killed in many countries. They have killed people of different faiths, but more than any other, they have killed Muslims. Their actions are irreconcilable with the rights of human beings, the progress of nations, and with Islam. The Holy Koran teaches that "whoever kills an innocent" is as—"it is as if he has killed all mankind." And the Holy Koran also says, "whoever saves a person, it is as if he has saved all mankind." The enduring faith of over a billion people is so much bigger than the narrow hatred of a few. Islam is not part of the problem in combating violent extremism, it is an important part of promoting peace.

Now, we also know that military power alone is not going to solve the problems in Afghanistan and Pakistan. That's why we plan to invest $1.5 billion each year over the next 5 years to partner with Pakistanis to build schools and hospitals, roads and businesses, and hundreds of millions to help those who've been displaced. That's why we are providing more than $2.8 billion to help Afghans develop their economy and deliver services that people depend on.

Let me also address the issue of Iraq. Unlike Afghanistan, Iraq was a war of choice that provoked strong differences in my country and around the world. Although I believe that the Iraqi people are ultimately better off without the tyranny of Saddam Hussein, I also believe that events in Iraq have reminded America of the need to use diplomacy and build international consensus to resolve our problems whenever possible. Indeed, we can recall the words of Thomas Jefferson, who said: "I hope that our wisdom will grow with our power and teach us that the less we use our power, the greater it will be."

Today, America has a dual responsibility to help Iraq forge a better future and to leave Iraq to Iraqis. And I have made it clear to the Iraqi people that we pursue no bases and no claim on their territory or resources. Iraq's sovereignty is its own. And that's why I ordered the removal of our combat brigades by next August. That is why we will honor our agreement with Iraq's democratically elected Government to remove combat troops from Iraqi cities by July and to remove all of our troops from Iraq by 2012. We will help Iraq train its security forces and develop its economy, but we will support a secure and united Iraq as a partner, and never as a patron.

And finally, just as America can never tolerate violence by extremists, we must never alter or forget our principles. Nine-eleven was an enormous trauma to our country. The fear and anger that it provoked was understandable, but in some cases, it led us to act contrary to our traditions and our ideals. We are taking concrete actions to change course. I have unequivocally prohibited the use of torture by the United States, and I have ordered the prison at Guantanamo Bay closed by early next year.

So America will defend itself, respectful of the sovereignty of nations and the rule of law, and we will do so in partnership with Muslim communities, which are also threatened. The sooner the extremists are isolated and unwelcome in Muslim communities, the sooner we will all be safer.

The second major source of tension that we need to discuss is the situation between Israelis, Palestinians, and the Arab world. America's strong bonds with Israel are well known. This bond is unbreakable. It is based upon cultural and historical ties and the recognition that the aspiration for a Jewish homeland is rooted in a tragic history that cannot be denied.

Around the world, the Jewish people were persecuted for centuries, and anti-Semitism in Europe culminated in an unprecedented Holocaust. Tomorrow I will visit Buchenwald, which was part of a network of camps where Jews were enslaved, tortured, shot, and gassed to death by the Third Reich. Six million Jews were killed, more than the entire Jewish population of Israel today. Denying that fact is baseless, it is ignorant, and it is hateful. Threatening Israel with destruction or repeating vile stereotypes about Jews is deeply wrong and only serves to evoke in the minds of Israelis this most painful of memories while preventing the peace that the people of this region deserve.

On the other hand, it is also undeniable that the Palestinian people, Muslims and Christians, have suffered in pursuit of a homeland. For more than 60 years, they've endured the pain of dislocation. Many wait in refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza, and neighboring lands for a life of peace and security that they have never been able to lead. They endure the daily humiliations, large and small, that come with occupation. So let there be no doubt, the situation for the Palestinian people is intolerable, and America will not turn our backs on the legitimate Palestinian aspiration for dignity, opportunity, and a state of their own.

For decades then, there has been a stalemate: two peoples with legitimate aspirations, each with a painful history that makes compromise elusive. It's easy to point fingers, for Palestinians to point to the displacement brought about by Israel's founding and for Israelis to point to the constant hostility and attacks throughout its history from within its borders, as well as beyond. But if we see this conflict only from one side or the other, then we will be blind to the truth. The only resolution is for the aspirations of both sides to be met through two states, where Israelis and Palestinians each live in peace and security.

That is in Israel's interest, Palestine's interest, America's interest, and the world's interest. And that is why I intend to personally pursue this outcome with all the patience and dedication that the task requires. The obligations that the parties have agreed to under the road map are clear. For peace to come, it is time for them, and all of us, to live up to our responsibilities.

Palestinians must abandon violence. Resistance through violence and killing is wrong, and it does not succeed. For centuries, black people in America suffered the lash of the whip as slaves and the humiliation of segregation. But it was not violence that won full and equal rights. It was a peaceful and determined insistence upon the ideals at the center of America's founding. This same story can be told by people from South Africa to South Asia, from Eastern Europe to Indonesia. It's a story with a simple truth: Violence is a dead end. It is a sign neither of courage nor power to shoot rockets at sleeping children or to blow up old women on a bus. That's not how moral authority is claimed; that's how it is surrendered.

Now is the time for Palestinians to focus on what they can build. The Palestinian Authority must develop its capacity to govern with institutions that serve the needs of its people. Hamas does have support among some Palestinians, but they also have to recognize they have responsibilities. To play a role in fulfilling Palestinian aspirations, to unify the Palestinian people, Hamas must put an end to violence, recognize past agreements, recognize Israel's right to exist.

At the same time, Israelis must acknowledge that just as Israel's right to exist cannot be denied, neither can Palestine's. The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. This construction violates previous agreements and undermines efforts to achieve peace. It is time for these settlements to stop.

And Israel must also live up to its obligation to ensure that Palestinians can live and work and develop their society. Just as it devastates Palestinian families, the continuing humanitarian crisis in Gaza does not serve Israel's security, neither does the continuing lack of opportunity in the West Bank. Progress in the daily lives of the Palestinian people must be a critical part of a road to peace, and Israel must take concrete steps to enable such progress.

And finally, the Arab States must recognize that the Arab Peace Initiative was an important beginning, but not the end of their responsibilities. The Arab-Israeli conflict should no longer be used to distract the people of Arab nations from other problems. Instead, it must be a cause for action to help the Palestinian people develop the institutions that will sustain their state, to recognize Israel's legitimacy, and to choose progress over a self-defeating focus on the past.

America will align our policies with those who pursue peace, and we will say in public what we say in private to Israelis and Palestinians and Arabs. We cannot impose peace. But privately, many Muslims recognize that Israel

will not go away. Likewise, many Israelis recognize the need for a Palestinian state. It is time for us to act on what everyone knows to be true.

Too many tears have been shed. Too much blood has been shed. All of us have a responsibility to work for the day when the mothers of Israelis and Palestinians can see their children grow up without fear, when the Holy Land of the three great faiths is the place of peace that God intended it to be, when Jerusalem is a secure and lasting home for Jews and Christians and Muslims and a place for all of the children of Abraham to mingle peacefully together as in the story of Isra, when Moses, Jesus, and Muhammed, peace be upon them, joined in prayer.

The third source of tension is our shared interest in the rights and responsibilities of nations on nuclear weapons. This issue has been a source of tension between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran. For many years, Iran has defined itself in part by its opposition to my country, and there is in fact a tumultuous history between us. In the middle of the cold war, the United States played a role in the overthrow of a democratically elected Iranian Government. Since the Islamic Revolution, Iran has played a role in acts of hostage-taking and violence against U.S. troops and civilians. This history is well known. Rather than remain trapped in the past, I've made it clear to Iran's leaders and people that my country is prepared to move forward. The question now is not what Iran is against, but rather what future it wants to build.

I recognize it will be hard to overcome decades of mistrust, but we will proceed with courage, rectitude, and resolve. There will be many issues to discuss between our two countries, and we are willing to move forward without preconditions on the basis of mutual respect. But it is clear to all concerned that when it comes to nuclear weapons, we have reached a decisive point. This is not simply about America's interests. It's about preventing a nuclear arms race in the Middle East that could lead this region and the world down a hugely dangerous path.

I understand those who protest that some countries have weapons that others do not. No single nation should pick and choose which nation holds nuclear weapons. And that's why I strongly reaffirmed America's commitment to seek a world in which no nations hold nuclear weapons. And any nation, including Iran, should have the right to access peaceful nuclear power, if it complies with its responsibilities under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. That commitment is at the core of the treaty, and it must be kept for all who fully abide by it. And I'm hopeful that all countries in the region can share in this goal.

The fourth issue that I will address is democracy. I know there has been controversy about the promotion of democracy in recent years, and much of this controversy is connected to the war in Iraq. So let me be clear: No system of government can or should be imposed by one nation by any other.

That does not lessen my commitment, however, to governments that reflect the will of the people. Each nation gives life to this principle in its own way, grounded in the traditions of its own people. America does not presume to know what is best for everyone, just as we would not presume to pick the outcome of a peaceful election. But I do have an unyielding belief that all people yearn for certain things: the ability to speak your mind and have a say in how you are governed, confidence in the rule of law and the equal administration of justice, government that is transparent and doesn't steal from the people, the freedom to live as you choose. These are not just American ideas, they are human rights. And that is why we will support them everywhere.

Now, there is no straight line to realize this promise, but this much is clear: Governments that protect these rights are ultimately more stable, successful, and secure. Suppressing ideas never succeeds in making them go away. America respects the right of all peaceful and law-abiding voices to be heard around the world, even if we disagree with them. And we will welcome all elected, peaceful governments, provided they govern with respect for all their people.

This last point is important, because there are some who advocate for democracy only when they're out of power. Once in power, they are ruthless in suppressing the rights of others. So no matter where it takes hold, government

of the people and by the people sets a single standard for all who would hold power. You must maintain your power through consent, not coercion; you must respect the rights of minorities and participate with a spirit of tolerance and compromise; you must place the interests of your people and the legitimate workings of the political process above your party. Without these ingredients, elections alone do not make true democracy.

Audience member. We love you!

The President. Thank you.

The fifth issue that we must address together is religious freedom. Islam has a proud tradition of tolerance. We see it in the history of Andalusia and Cordoba during the Inquisition. I saw it firsthand as a child in Indonesia, where devout Christians worshiped freely in an overwhelmingly Muslim country. That is the spirit we need today. People in every country should be free to choose and live their faith based upon the persuasion of the mind and the heart and the soul. This tolerance is essential for religion to thrive, but it's being challenged in many different ways.

Among some Muslims, there's a disturbing tendency to measure one's own faith by the rejection of somebody else's faith. The richness of religious diversity must be upheld, whether it is for Maronites in Lebanon or the Copts in Egypt. And if we are being honest, fault lines must be closed among Muslims as well, as the divisions between Sunni and Shi'a have led to tragic violence, particularly in Iraq.

Freedom of religion is central to the ability of peoples to live together. We must always examine the ways in which we protect it. For instance, in the United States, rules on charitable giving have made it harder for Muslims to fulfill their religious obligation. That's why I'm committed to working with American Muslims to ensure that they can fulfill *zakat*.

Likewise, it is important for Western countries to avoid impeding Muslim citizens from practicing religion as they see fit, for instance, by dictating what clothes a Muslim woman should wear. We can't disguise hostility towards any religion behind the pretence of liberalism.

In fact, faith should bring us together. And that's why we're forging service projects in America to bring together Christians, Muslims, and Jews. That's why we welcome efforts like Saudi Arabian King Abdallah's interfaith dialog and Turkey's leadership in the Alliance of Civilizations. Around the world, we can turn dialog into interfaith service, so bridges between peoples lead to action, whether it is combating malaria in Africa or providing relief after a natural disaster.

The sixth issue that I want to address is women's rights. I know—[*applause*]—I know, and you can tell from this audience, that there is a healthy debate about this issue. I reject the view of some in the West that a woman who chooses to cover her hair is somehow less equal, but I do believe that a woman who is denied an education is denied equality. And it is no coincidence that countries where women are well educated are far more likely to be prosperous.

Now, let me be clear: Issues of women's equality are by no means simply an issue for Islam. In Turkey, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, we've seen Muslim-majority countries elect a woman to lead. Meanwhile, the struggle for women's equality continues in many aspects of American life and in countries around the world.

I am convinced that our daughters can contribute just as much to society as our sons. Our common prosperity will be advanced by allowing all humanity, men and women, to reach their full potential. I do not believe that women must make the same choices as men in order to be equal, and I respect those women who choose to live their lives in traditional roles. But it should be their choice. And that is why the United States will partner with any Muslim-majority country to support expanded literacy for girls and to help young women pursue employment through microfinancing that helps people live their dreams.

Finally, I want to discuss economic development and opportunity. I know that for many, the face of globalization is contradictory. The Internet and television can bring knowledge and information, but also offensive sexuality and mindless violence into the home. Trade

can bring new wealth and opportunities, but also huge disruptions and change in communities. In all nations, including America, this change can bring fear. Fear that because of modernity, we lose control over our economic choices, our politics, and, most importantly, our identities, those things we most cherish about our communities, our families, our traditions, and our faith.

But I also know that human progress cannot be denied. There need not be contradictions between development and tradition. Countries like Japan and South Korea grew their economies enormously while maintaining distinct cultures. The same is true for the astonishing progress within Muslim-majority countries from Kuala Lumpur to Dubai. In ancient times and in our times, Muslim communities have been at the forefront of innovation and education.

And this is important, because no development strategy can be based only upon what comes out of the ground, nor can it be sustained while young people are out of work. Many Gulf States have enjoyed great wealth as a consequence of oil, and some are beginning to focus it on broader development. But all of us must recognize that education and innovation will be the currency of the 21st century, and in too many Muslim communities there remains underinvestment in these areas. I'm emphasizing such investment within my own country. And while America in the past has focused on oil and gas when it comes to this part of the world, we now seek a broader engagement.

On education, we will expand exchange programs and increase scholarships like the one that brought my father to America. At the same time, we will encourage more Americans to study in Muslim communities. And we will match promising Muslim students with internships in America, invest in online learning for teachers and children around the world, and create a new online network so a young person in Kansas can communicate instantly with a young person in Cairo.

On economic development, we will create a new corps of business volunteers to partner with counterparts in Muslim-majority countries. And I will host a summit on entrepreneurship this year to identify how we can deepen ties between business leaders, foundations, and social entrepreneurs in the United States and Muslim communities around the world.

On science and technology, we will launch a new fund to support technological development in Muslim-majority countries and to help transfer ideas to mark—to the marketplace so they can create more jobs. We'll open centers of scientific excellence in Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia and appoint new science envoys to collaborate on programs that develop new sources of energy, create green jobs, digitize records, clean water, grow new crops. Today I'm announcing a new global effort with the Organization of the Islamic Conference to eradicate polio. And we will also expand partnerships with Muslim communities to promote child and maternal health.

All these things must be done in partnership. Americans are ready to join with citizens and governments, community organizations, religious leaders, and businesses in Muslim communities around the world to help our people pursue a better life.

And the issues that I have described will not be easy to address, but we have a responsibility to join together on behalf of the world that we seek, a world where extremists no longer threaten our people and American troops have come home, a world where Israelis and Palestinians are each secure in a state of their own and nuclear energy is used for peaceful purposes, a world where governments serve their citizens and the rights of all God's children are respected. Those are mutual interests. That is the world we seek, but we can only achieve it together.

I know there are many, Muslim and non-Muslim, who question whether we can forge this new beginning. Some are eager to stoke the flames of division and to stand in the way of progress. Some suggest that it isn't worth the effort, that we are fated to disagree and civilizations are doomed to clash. Many more are simply skeptical that real change can occur. There's so much fear, so much mistrust that has built up over the years. But if we choose to be bound by the past, we will never move forward. And I want to particularly say this to young people of every faith in every country: You, more than

anyone, have the ability to reimagine the world, to remake this world.

All of us share this world for but a brief moment in time. The question is whether we spend that time focused on what pushes us apart, or whether we commit ourselves to an effort, a sustained effort to find common ground, to focus on the future we seek for our children, and to respect the dignity of all human beings.

It's easier to start wars than to end them. It's easier to blame others than to look inward. It's easier to see what is different about someone than to find the things we share. But we should choose the right path, not just the easy path. There's one rule that lies at the heart of every religion, that we do unto others as we would have them do unto us. This truth transcends nations and peoples, a belief that isn't new, that isn't black or white or brown, that isn't Christian or Muslim or Jew. It's a belief that pulsed in the cradle of civilization and that still beats in the hearts of billions around the world. It's a faith in other people, and it's what brought me here today. We have the power to make the world we seek, but only if we have the courage to make a new beginning, keeping in mind what has been written.

The Holy Koran tells us: "O mankind! We have created you male and a female, and we have made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another." The Talmud tells us: "The whole of the Torah is for the purpose of promoting peace." The Holy Bible tells us: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." The people of the world can live together in peace. We know that is God's vision, now that must be our work here on Earth.

Thank you, and may God's peace be upon you. Thank you very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:10 p.m. at Cairo University. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Keith Ellison. The Office of the Press Secretary also released Arabic, Chinese, Dari, French, Hebrew, Hindi, Indonesian, Malay, Pashto, Persian, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Turkish, and Urdu language transcripts of these remarks.

Statement on the Transition to Digital Television Programming
June 4, 2009

On June 12, 1 week from tomorrow, the Nation's full-power television stations will switch to all-digital programming. The transition to digital will free up airwaves for broadband and enhanced emergency communications for our police officers, firefighters, and other first responders.

In February, I worked with Congress to postpone the deadline television broadcasters had to end their analog signals, because it was clear that millions of Americans would have been left in the dark if the conversion had gone on as planned. I directed key members of my administration to reach out and help Americans, especially those in our most vulnerable communities, to make the switch to digital television.

In the months since then, we have worked hand in hand with State and local officials, broadcasters, and community groups to educate and assist millions of Americans with the transition. The number of households unprepared for digital television has been cut in half. Still, some people are not ready. I want to be clear: There will not be another delay. I urge everyone who is not yet prepared to act today, so you don't lose important news and emergency information on June 12. And I encourage all Americans who are prepared, to talk to their friends, family, and neighbors to make sure they get ready before it's too late.

Interview With Foreign Journalists in Cairo
June 4, 2009

The President. So I know that we only have half an hour, and I want to make sure that everybody has time for questions. So I'm not going to make an opening statement; I just made a long one in the auditorium, and I'll just open it up and maybe if you want, we'll just go around the room. Is that okay? And we'll start with you, Wafa.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Well, thank you for your speech. I'm sure that the Palestinians are overwhelmed by some of the things that you have said regarding the Palestinian issue, specifically about the settlements. We have not heard a U.S. President, or any U.S. official before, saying the United States does not recognize the legitimacy of settlements.

However, the Palestinians want to see—want you to show them how different you are from other Presidents. Are there measures that the United States will take in order to ensure that settlement expansion is——

[*At this point, there was a brief interruption to the interview.*]

The President. I think you pressed play instead of record; you're getting somebody's interview on that.

Q. I'm so sorry.

The President. No, no, no. Go ahead.

Q. Anyway, so if the Israelis do not stop the settlements as specified in phase one of the roadmap, are there measures that you plan to take in order to enforce that?

The President. Well, I think it's premature for me to go beyond the principles that I've laid out in the speech, and let me explain why. Prime Minister Netanyahu has only been in office now for a month, month and a half. President Abbas I just met with 2 weeks ago. I'm still in the process of consulting with Arab States throughout the region.

And so I think it's very important for all the parties to listen, to take measure of what they can do, how far they're willing to go, before I make any reactions or prejudge what direction the negotiations should go in.

The one thing I know is this: This is a difficult issue across the board. I don't think we should underestimate the difficulties; passions are very high on both sides; the politics are very difficult on both sides. But one of the things that I committed to during my campaign was that I would not wait until my sixth or seventh or eighth year in office, or if I only get 4, my third or fourth year in office, but that I was going to start right away. And I think that's what's required, is serious, long-term U.S. engagement.

I've assigned a special envoy, George Mitchell, who is traveling back and forth between all the various interested parties. And we've set out some clear parameters in terms of how we are going to approach the problem. And my hope and expectation is that there is going to be some difficulties, but ultimately, both the Israelis and Palestinians are going to recognize this is in their interests.

That's the main thing that I wanted to emphasize in the speech: The United States cannot impose a solution, but perhaps because we're not immediately in the heat of the passions involved, perhaps we can see why it's so important for both Israelis and Palestinians to resolve this and resolve this soon and not continue to let it fester. And that's what I'm committed to.

Q. Is there a timeline or timeframe for U.S.——

The President. I don't want to impose an artificial timeline, but I think that all of us probably had a sense in our gut of, "Are things moving forward?", or "Have they stalled?" There's historically been a rhythm to negotiations in the region. And when things stall, everybody knows it. People may say a lot of words, but everybody knows that nothing is happening. Right now things have been stalled for quite some time. When things are moving, people also know that.

And so what I want to—I want to have a sense of movement and progress. And I think that can be achieved.

Okay. Magdi—and I'll listen to my translation.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. I think your speech was wonderful and more, above and beyond everybody was expecting. And you have talked about the Middle East and the future of this region. You also spoke about the commitment of the United States towards achieving progress towards special issues. I also believe there are some difficulties. I might want to be much more precise.

I have one question: How is your administration going to deal with the current Israeli Government and with Hamas as a part and parcel of the Palestinian portfolio? And I think so many believe that Hamas is a difficult question that the previous administration did not deal with. What is your vision and your view in dealing with Hamas and dealing with the hawks in the current Israeli Government?

The other issue is your clarity and your vision makes me want to ask you, who are your partners in the region that you can rely on to achieve your objectives, either on the Palestinian issue or the Iraqi issue or the Afghanistan issue? Thank you, sir.

The President. First of all, I tried to make clear in my speech that when it comes to Hamas, there is no doubt that Hamas has some support among Palestinians. That was shown in the last election; that cannot be denied. What I also said is that Hamas has responsibilities to those people it represents to have a responsible approach to actually delivering a Palestinian state.

If Hamas's approach is based on the idea that Israel will cease to exist, that's an illusion. And what that means is that they are more interested in talk than in results. If they are serious about delivering a Palestinian state, then they should renounce violence, accept the framework provided by the previous agreements, recognize Israel's right to exist. That still leaves enormous room for them to negotiate on a whole host of issues.

But at minimum, they can't provide the results for the people they claim to represent if they're not acknowledging reality. So you know, this is really a decision for Hamas to make.

Now, with respect to the Israeli Government, I've had three meetings with Prime Minister Netanyahu. The first two was while I was a United States Senator, and one in the White House just recently. In each case, I found him to be a very intelligent, very engaging person, a excellent communicator. And I think because this is the second time that he's serving as Prime Minister, I think he feels a very real historic sense about the task before him.

Obviously, it was a very close election in Israel. It took some time to put that coalition together. That means that politics are complicated. And I think that just as so many Palestinians have lost confidence and faith that the process can move forward, I think there are a lot of Israelis who have lost confidence and faith that they will ever be recognized by Arab States, or that there will be security that is meaningful, where rockets aren't fired into Israel.

And so I believe that Prime Minister Netanyahu will recognize the strategic need to deal with this issue, and that in some ways, he may have an opportunity that a Labor or more left leader might not have. There's the famous example of Richard Nixon going to China. A Democrat couldn't have gone to China; a liberal couldn't have gone to China. But a big anti-Communist like Richard Nixon could open that door.

Now, it's conceivable that Prime Minister Netanyahu can play that same role. But it's going to be difficult, and I don't want to diminish the difficulties for any of the parties involved in making these decisions because, as I said, there are a lot of passions in the people. But part of leadership is being able to push beyond immediate politics to get to where, ultimately, the people need to go.

And in terms of partners more broadly, my attitude at this point is, I want to work with everybody I can to get things done.

Nahum.

Iran

Q. First of all, Mr. President, I want to congratulate you for a great speech.

The President. Thank you.

Q. I believe that everybody in the region listened to it, including in my country.

One question, which really worries the Israelis, is Iran. In your speech, you didn't indicate whether at certain point you—or whether—to stop the nuclearization of Iran is an American national goal, which has to be fulfilled.

The President. Well, keep in mind that I've been very clear on this in the past, and I will continue to be clear on the fact that an Iranian nuclear weapon would be profoundly destabilizing for the entire region. It is strongly in America's interest to prevent such a scenario.

But I believe it's in the interest of everybody in the region—indeed, I actually think it's in Iran's interest—to prevent such a scenario, because it would be a very dangerous place if everybody decides that they need to have a nuclear weapon in the neighborhood, particularly given the conflicts that exist not just between—the tensions between Israel and Iran, but there are a wide set of conflicts that would be affected.

So my approach, as I've said, is to reach out to Iran to suggest talks without preconditions, but also to—and as I said in my speech, to have a wide range of issues to discuss. But the issue that is time sensitive, where we have to make progress because we are reaching a critical point, is on the issue of nuclear weapons. And so one of the things that I want to do is to put this in a broader context. I want this not just to be an American effort, or an Israeli concern, but I think it's an international concern. And as committed as I am to diplomacy, as I said in the White House just a few weeks ago, I'm not just going to talk just for talking sake. If I don't see meaningful progress in these talks, then that will indicate to me that the Islamic Republic is not serious.

The President's Speech in Cairo/Middle East Peace Process

Q. If I may——

The President. Please.

Q. Sorry. You didn't mention the word "normalization" between Israel and the Arab world in your speech. Is it—does it indicate something?

The President. It doesn't indicate anything. I think the working assumption—and that's why I added the issue of Arab State responsibilities, not just Israeli and Palestinian responsibilities. I added that paragraph because I thought it was very important to reinforce the notion that the region as a whole has to take responsibility for solving this issue. And I think from Israel's perspective, the importance of knowing that as a consequence of making the necessary compromises to achieve a two-state solution, they are not only making peace and doing what is just with respect to the Palestinians, but that they are also securing—that they are also meeting their own security needs, and broader threats that might come from beyond Gaza or the West Bank—that's a very important element.

It also, by the way, would allow, I think, the entire region to prosper much more effectively. If you think about the possibilities of commerce and trade in the Middle East, if a country like Israel, as powerful as it is, were able to have normalized commercial relations with Gulf States, with a Palestinian state that is full of talent, and you suddenly have all the Palestinian diaspora coming back and investing and businesspeople throughout the region, you could see huge economic benefits, as well as security benefits.

But we're very far from that vision. So right now I just want us to start taking that step down the road. You know, there's the well-known saying that the hardest step on any journey is always the first one.

Yes.

Indonesia/The President's Upcoming Visit to Asia

Q. Thank you, President Obama. Of course, as an Indonesian, my first question would be, when will you come to Indonesia?

The President. Oh, I need to come to Indonesia soon. I expect to be traveling to Asia at some point within the next year, and I would be surprised if when I came to Asia I did not stop by my old home town of Jakarta. And I'll go visit Menteng Dalam and have some *bakso*, *nasi*

goreng. These are some special dishes here that I used to eat when I was a kid.

Q. Actually, I live only 300 meters from your old house.

The President. Is that right?

Q. Yes, Menteng Dalam.

The President. Except now it's all paved.

Q. Yes, it's all paved.

The President. Yes, see, when I was there, it was all dirt, so when the rains came it would all be mud, and all the cars would get stuck.

Q. And your school is much better now.

The President. It's nicer now, yes. [*Laughter*] Okay.

Q. That would be November, APEC maybe?

The President. Well, I don't want to make any—[*laughter*]—firm commitments.

The President's Speech in Cairo/Religion/President's Religious Beliefs

Q. Okay. And the second is, you know, I read your book, "The Audacity of Hope," and I had a very great hope that you can reach the Muslim community, because it seemed to me your understanding of a relationship between faith and politics, especially in black churches, is very much—I can imagine someone who is a Hamas or, you know, maybe radical Islamist would probably, if you take away the word "Islam" and change it with, you know, "black Christian," it's exactly the same. Do you feel that way also?

The President. Well, you know, I think it's interesting. Obviously, I'm a person of faith, and as a Christian, but also as somebody who believes very strongly in democracy and human rights—and I'm a constitutional law professor, so I have some very strong ideas about how a pluralistic society lives together—these are things that I do spend time thinking about.

What I tried to communicate in the speech and what I believe very strongly is that in an interdependent world like ours, where the world has shrunk and different peoples with different faiths and different ideas are constantly having to coexist, that we have to have a mature faith that says, "I believe with all my heart and all my soul in what I believe, but I respect the fact that somebody else believes their beliefs just as strongly." And so the only way that we are going to live together or operate in a political system that can work for everybody is if we have certain rules about how we relate to each other.

I can't force my religion on you. I can't try to organize a majority to discriminate against you because you're a religious minority. I can't simply take what's in my religious beliefs and say you have to believe and abide by these same things. Now, that doesn't mean that I can't make arguments that are based on my belief and my faith, right? If I'm a Christian, I believe in the Ten Commandments. And it says, "Thou shalt not kill." If I'm a politician and I say I'm going to pass a law against murdering somebody, that's not me practicing my religious faith; that's me practicing morality that may be based in religious faith, but that's a universal principle, or at least one that can translate into a principle that people of various faiths can agree on.

I think it's very important for Islam to wrestle with these issues. Now, I recognize that not all religious beliefs are going to be exactly the same in how they think about politics. And so in Islam, there's a debate about *sharia* and how strict an interpretation or how moderate an interpretation of that should be; or should that be something that is not part of the secular law. I don't presume to make that decision for any country or any groups of people. But I do think that if you start having rules that guarantee other faiths and other groups, or in the case of the United States people with no faith at all, are somehow forced to abide by somebody else's faith, I think that is a violation of the spirit of democracy, and I think that over the long term, that's going to breed conflict in some way. It will lead to some sort of instability and destructiveness in that society.

But, as I said, I think this is a important debate that has to take place inside Islam. I think in the meantime—the one thing I can say for certain is that people who justify killing other people based on faith are misreading their sacred texts. And I think they are out of alignment with God. Now, that's my belief. And that, I think, is a debate that I think is settled for the vast majority of Muslims, but we have a

very small minority that can be very destructive, and that's part of what I tried to discuss in my speech.

The President's Speech in Cairo/U.S. Relations With the Muslim World

Q. Mr. President, why have you chosen—why did you choose Cairo as the venue for the speech? Because the Arab population, after all, make up only about 20 percent of the Muslim population, and Indonesia——

The President. I should have gone to Kuala Lumpur. [*Laughter*]

Q. Or Indonesia, which is the biggest country. And also, I mean, the expectations on you are really, really high doing something to heal the rift. Do you find that a burden at all? And what would be your yardstick of success in mending ties in your first year—first term of office?

The President. Okay. Well, I thought it was important to come to Cairo because I think, if we're honest, the greatest tension when it comes to the relationship between the Muslim world and the United States in recent years has centered around the Middle East. In some ways, going to Indonesia would almost be cheating—[*laughter*]—because I would have a home court advantage. Not only am I personally close to the culture and have a sister who's half Indonesian, but I think that, frankly, the relationship between the United States and Indonesia has generally been strong. It was weakened for a time immediately after the Iraqi invasion, but generally speaking, there have been strong lines of communication.

And so my tendency is to go to the source of the problem and not try to avoid the problem. And I think that the source of the problem in this situation has to do with the United States and countries in the Middle East not communicating effectively.

And in terms of expectations, I tried to be very clear that one speech alone does not solve all these problems. What I wanted to do was simply to start a conversation, not just between me and the Muslim world, but within the Muslim world and within America and the West about how do we finally start being honest about some of these problems, and that once you diagnose a problem, it still may take a long time to actually cure the problem, but you're never going to cure it unless you diagnose it. And so what I was trying to do was at least to get us to start thinking about what are the real three, four, five, six things that are at the heart of the argument, and let's go ahead and look at those directly and see are there ways where we can at least agree to what the nature of the problem is. That's how we can begin to solve it.

But it's going to take a long time to solve many of these issues, and I don't expect that some of these problems will ever go away completely.

Israel-U.S. Relations/Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, first, thank you for your excellent speech.

The President. Thank you.

Q. Second, I would like to ask you a question about American policy. I go often to the United States in my work, and I meet a lot of people. And my last trip—and it was after your Inauguration, a few weeks—you met with the key members of your party in the Congress at that time. And we read in the papers that what you did is you convinced them of your approach to the peace in the Middle East. And everybody was—then the expectation rose in the Arab world and in the Muslim world.

When they saw Mr. Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel, refusing a two-state solution, refusing the freeze of the settlements, and the not talking about this issue, and then when we saw this letter of 300 Members of the Congress, some of the Arabs thought that maybe it was AIPAC again, which is trying to influence the Congress. So my question is, do you feel that, as an administration, can you pressure Mr. Netanyahu, if need be, domestically, and can you—do you think that also Mr. Netanyahu can endanger the historic alliance and relation between his country and the United States?

The President. Well, first of all, I tried to make very clear in the speech, the bond between the United States and Israel is unbreakable. It transcends party; it will be there if there's a Democratic President or a Republican President, if there is a Democratic Congress or a Republican Congress. The ties are just very

deep. They're cultural; they're historic; they're familial. I mean, I think Nahum would be the first one to acknowledge, I don't know what number of American-born Jews are now Israeli citizens, but it's a pretty high number. There's constant—I mean, there's constant flow back and forth. So there's just—they're very close ties.

So expecting a break between the United States and Israel is, I think, not something that people should anticipate.

I think that the second thing I want to emphasize is, it's only been 4 months—5 months. Netanyahu has only been in office, what is it, a month and a half? I mean, since the Government formed. I mean, he was elected April 1st. So 2 months. We've been waiting 60 years. So we maybe might just want to try a few more months before everybody starts looking at doomsday scenarios.

This is difficult, and it's going to take some time. Now, it's going to take time for Palestinian leadership. We just discussed the issue of how Palestinians unify around some core principles that could facilitate talks from going forward. That's not an easy task. There are some very deep-seated arguments between Hamas and Abbas and Fatah. And I think we would be naive to think that somehow overnight those problems are going to be solved.

If Hamas wants to participate, it's going to have its own political problems internal to Hamas, because there are some who will never agree to recognizing Israel, in part because they would prefer being in the role that they're in now, which is in opposition and obtaining financing and support and living in Damascus and doing what they do, to governing. And I think that's going to have to be tested. They're going to have to make some decisions. That's going to be difficult.

For Israel, these are also difficult decisions. I believe that, as I said in the speech, these settlements are an impediment to peace. But that's not to deny the fact that there are people who are already living in some of these settlements, that there is a momentum to some of these settlements. Turning back those settlements involves very tough choices.

So all these things are going to take time, but this is why I say America can't—we cannot do this for the parties. I mean, I do think that sometimes there is a schizophrenic view in the Middle East of America. On the one hand, everybody wants America to stop meddling, "Don't interfere; don't be imperialist." And then on the other hand, "When is America going to solve the Palestinian crisis? Why haven't they done this? Why haven't they created democracy and human rights in—throughout the Muslim world?" Well, you can't have it both ways, right? We can't, on the one hand, be the respectful partner who's listening to other countries, and on the other hand, you expect us to solve every problem, and nobody else makes an effort. And part of what I've tried to do today is to instead say, we will be a partner, we will work with you, but everybody is going to have to carry their own weight on this thing.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Are the Arabs who are now the allies of the United States of America, are they ready to be real partners? Because in the past, some of them were not partners, real partners, especially——

The President. Give me an example.

Q. For example, in the time of Yasser Arafat and the meetings between President Clinton, I think, and Mr. Arafat and maybe Mr. Barak, most of the Americans I met said, "Well, it was Arafat who backed off." Although, some people say, "No, this is not the story," but this is what I heard. And when I asked some of my friends in the States, they said, "Well, the Arabs"—which means, at that time, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, who were the allies of Yasser Arafat and allies of the United States—"did not force him or did not try to convince him just to accept what was the parameter of solution," which was at that time offered and I don't think described something better.

The President. Let me just say this: One of the things I've learned about being President is I always read about things that I don't remember happening, even though I was in the room, probably because they didn't happen. So I don't try to guess or speculate on what happened a decade ago with respect to why a

peace deal was not completed. What's more important from my perspective is, how do we now move forward?

And I think that all the parties involved are going to have to seize this moment. And it's going to require some risks. And part of the reason that I tried to emphasize this in a public speech is, leaders have to have followers, and it's important for the publics in Muslim communities to be supportive of the efforts of Arab States to solve this problem and, ultimately, help to create a two-state solution and better or normalized relations with Israel, just as it's important for the Israeli population to provide space for their leadership to make difficult decisions, and it's important for the Palestinian people to provide an atmosphere in which the Palestinian leadership can make difficult decisions.

You know, politicians, they lead, but ultimately, they can't be so far ahead of their people that those bonds between the leader and the people are ruptured. And so if we're going to be serious about this, then the people have to at least try to keep pace with what I hope will be leadership across the board.

Jamal, last question.

Saudi Arabia/Saudi Arabia-U.S. Relations

Q. All right, Mr. President. In your speech, you made a reference to the conflicts which are poisoning the relations between the Muslim world and the West, and America in particular. You just came from a partner country, a strategic partner, Saudi Arabia. In your effort to resolve conflicts in Iraq, in Afghanistan—maybe you have noticed that Saudi Arabia keep its distance with the previous administration from those two countries. Did you develop any plans with King Abdallah, who will share the same views as you, so you would work together in your work in Iraq and Pakistan and Afghanistan?

The President. Well, I certainly discussed these issues with His Majesty. I try not to disclose the contents of private meetings unless there's been a joint decision that we will discuss them, because I want to always have frank conversations with these leaders. But I can say this: Saudi Arabia is, obviously, absolutely critical to solving a range of problems in the Middle East. It is an economic leader because of not only its oil wealth but its broad-based development strategies. It is a thought leader and a religious leader because of Mecca and Medina.

And so if we are talking about Iraq, for example, I think normalizing relations and exchanging ambassadors between Saudi Arabia and Iraq will be helpful to Iraq and its stabilization. With respect to Pakistan and the situation in Afghanistan/Pakistan, we're seeing a lot of displaced people. Making sure that there are resources that are put in place so that those displaced persons don't experience enormous suffering, but also so that you don't have further radicalization of an entire population that has been uprooted because of conflict, Saudi Arabia is going to be critical.

So on all these issues, I think Saudi leadership is something that is desirable. I also happen to have what I consider, and I hope he considers as well, a very good and warm relationship with His Majesty. I think he is a very wise man, and he is a very honest man, and I have great respect for him.

The President's Speech in Cairo

Q. A question about the other audience who were not here at the gathering. You spoke to a very receptive, cheerful—they declared their love to you also. But the radicals, whom we need to address—Usama bin Laden is alive. They have their influence, they have——

The President. Yes, of course, yes, absolutely.

Q. ——but they have their influence. What are you going to do about that? And a king like King Abdallah and others——

The President. Well, Al Qaida we will defeat because they kill innocent people. And so I hope I've made that very clear. I am a strong believer in dialog, but I don't think that any nation should tolerate an international network that is willing to murder men and women and children who have done nothing.

That can't be the basis for justice. That can't be the basis for any governing ideology. I mean, who would live like that, that I decide somebody lives with a different religion or has a different skin color or looks like somebody that I don't like, and I'm just going to go ahead and

target them deliberately? That philosophy is bankrupt. And so we will go after them.

Now, that's not easy, obviously. And part of the reason it's not easy is because they are adept at exploiting the very real tensions that exist that I discussed today.

So my audience is not them. I don't expect to change their minds, obviously. My audience is, though, say, the 20-year-old young man in Cairo in maybe one of the poorer sections of Cairo or in Gaza or in Damascus or in Tripoli who is still searching, is still looking for a way. And my message to that young man or that young woman would be, it is possible for you to be true to your faith, true to your traditions, but instead of destroying, you can build. And if you see injustice, then the way to achieve the changes you seek is not through violence, but is through persuasion. And if I reach a few of those 20-year-olds, or I reach their parents and maybe they have a conversation and debate with those young men and women, then perhaps that can make a difference when somebody tries to recruit that person to join an extremist organization.

Gaza

Q. Any quick solutions to Gaza?

The President. No quick solutions to Gaza, but by the end of this year, my country will have invested $900 million, almost a billion dollars, in humanitarian relief in Gaza. I think it's very important that we find ways to loosen the borders so that more supplies, more medicine, more infrastructure development can get into Gaza for rebuilding. I think part of that is the international community working to ensure that the smuggling of weapons that are then fired into Israel are no longer taking place. That's going to be a difficult task, but it's one that we're going to have to work on, because in the absence of that, we're not going to solve it.

Okay, everybody, I have to go see the Pyramids. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The interview began at 2:31 p.m. at Cairo University. Participating in the roundtable interview were freelance journalist Wafa Amr; Magdi El-Galad, editor in chief, Al Masry Al Youm; Nahum Barnea, senior editorialist, Yediot Ahronot; Bambang Haryamurti, editor in chief, TEMPO Weekly Newsmagazine and TEMPO Daily Newspaper; Jamal Khashoggi, editor in chief, Al-Watan; Shahanaaz Sher Habib, senior journalist, The Star; freelance journalist Fahmy Huweidy; and Sarkis Naoum, senior editor, An-Nahar. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel; President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority; U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George J. Mitchell; and King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. Some reporters referred to former Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel; and Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization. One reporter spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 5. Audio was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

The President's News Conference With Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany in Dresden, Germany
June 5, 2009

Chancellor Merkel. Well, good morning, ladies and gentlemen. We are delighted to have the American President here this morning with us, after having met for the last time at the NATO summit. We will visit a little bit of Dresden, and later on we go on to Buchenwald, to the foremost concentration camp. I think that this is, indeed, a trip of a highly symbolic nature. Let me just remind all of us of the visit to Buchenwald that we will take later in the day. It is so important that the American President, Barack Obama, makes his first stop here in Dresden. This is a highly symbolic city. It is a city that was almost completely destroyed during the Second World War, was then rebuilt after German unification. It has

again turned out to be a jewel of German culture and civilization. The people here are so glad that you've come to see them because it shows that you also pay tribute to the tremendous efforts they made in those 20 years after the fall of the wall.

We have made very good use of our time, talking about the political agenda, pressing issues. President Obama yesterday gave a very important speech in Cairo, which I think will be an ideal basis for a lot of action in a—of a positive nature, particularly as regards speeding up the peace process in the Middle East. We also talked about a possible timeframe for possible progress to be made. I said on behalf of the Federal Republic of Germany that we would like to try and be helpful in this peace process to the extent that this is possible to us. We need a two-state solution; we need a viable Palestinian state and a viable State of Israel, side by side. And whatever we can do in order to constructively accompany this along the way, we will gladly do.

The status of negotiations with Iran on the nuclear program was also at the very top of our agenda. Here, too, we agreed to work closely together. Germany will try its utmost with its contacts, with its expert knowledge to give a positive contribution to this issue.

We also, obviously, debated the situation on world markets. We exchanged views on the different stimulus programs that we pursue in our countries. And we also talked about what we feel is necessary in order to prepare the next G–20 meeting, then also the upcoming G–8 meeting. What is important is to implement what we decided on in London. The European states are now doing that; the United States are doing that. You have a very ambitious plan that you outlaid. So we will keep a close eye on developments. And then in the autumn, when we meet as G–20, we will also state very clearly that strengthening the multilateral system is also one that we consider to be important.

This year, negotiations on climate change, on a post-Kyoto regime are also on the agenda. We very much welcome the very, very hard work that the United States has done in order to see to it that the necessary answers are found for this phenomenon of climate change. We know that it's very much an uphill battle; we're very familiar with that from the debate that we have here in our country. And we are keeping a close eye on legislation that is passed. We, I think, are at one in saying we need an ambitious program, we want to have successful negotiations in Copenhagen, and we want to make the best possible use of our time leading up to this.

Once again, a very warm welcome to you, sir, and we are so glad that you and the members of your team are—have taken the trouble to come here.

President Obama. Well, thank you very much, everybody. Good morning. It is wonderful to be in the beautiful city of Dresden, which, obviously, is steeped in history and, as Chancellor Merkel discussed, has overcome great tragedies and is now this beautiful city full of hope. And so I'm very grateful to not only Chancellor Merkel but to the German people for their hospitality.

Germany is a close friend and a critical partner to the United States, and I believe that friendship is going to be essential not only for our two countries but for the world if we are to make progress on some of the critical issues that we face, whether it's national security issues or economic issues or issues that affect the globe like climate change.

Chancellor Merkel, as she mentioned, and I had a very productive discussion. We continue to work closely together to confront the global economic crisis and to restore growth and prosperity for our people. The downturn knows no borders, and it will take some time and sustained action by all of us to move forward.

At the G–20, we successfully laid out a—the parameters for collective action. And we've seen, I think, on both sides of the Atlantic some progress in stabilizing the economy, but we're far from done in the work that's required. I mentioned to her that, in the United States, we are working diligently to strengthen financial regulations to ensure that a crisis like this doesn't happen again, and it's going to be very important to coordinate between Europe and the United States as we move to strengthen our financial regulatory systems. We affirmed that we are not going to engage in protectionism. And as all of us do what's required to restart our

economy, we have to make sure that we keep our borders open and that companies can move back and forth between the United States and Europe in providing goods and services to our respective countries.

I'm very pleased to see the resolution of the Opel situation here. We are very sympathetic towards each other, that it's not easy to help auto companies restructure, and it's not always popular, but it's also, we are convinced, the right thing to do. And I'm hopeful that not only are we going to see these companies stabilize, but also that they're going to emerge even stronger and more competitive in the international marketplace.

Chancellor Merkel and I discussed a range of security challenges. Germany has been a very strong NATO partner. As all of you know, we have great challenges in Afghanistan and, increasingly, in Pakistan, but our collective commitment to making sure that we are not seeing the kinds of terrorist bases that could pose harm to all of our people, that we maintain that commitment.

We also discussed the issue of Iran, and not in isolation, but in a broader context of avoiding a nuclear arms race in the Middle East that could be profoundly dangerous. And I've said publicly that I'm committed to engaging in serious dialog and negotiations with Iran. That is—can't be done in isolation, it has to be done in conjunction with the P–5-plus-1 or the E–3-plus-3 process, and Germany is going to be a critical partner in that process.

Later in the summer, I will be traveling to Russia to discuss how we can reduce U.S. nuclear stockpiles and Russian nuclear stockpiles. And so, as I said, our concern is not just Iran, but a broader effort to strengthen nonproliferation so that the threat of nuclear weapons is greatly reduced in our lifetime.

And as Chancellor mentioned, we discussed my recent trip to the Middle East and the need for all of us to redouble our efforts to bring about two states, Israel and a Palestinian state, that are living side by side in peace and security. I think the moment is now for us to act on what we all know to be the truth, which is that each side is going to have to make some difficult compromises; we have to reject violence. The Palestinians have to get serious about creating the security environment that is required for Israel to feel confident. Israelis are going to have to take some difficult steps. I discussed some of those in the speech.

Ultimately, the United States can't force peace upon the parties. But what we've tried to do is to clear away some of the misunderstandings so that we can at least begin to have frank dialog. And we're not going to be able to do that by ourselves; we're going to require strong partners like Germany in that process. And I know that Chancellor Merkel is very much committed to that.

So, again, it is a great pleasure to be here. It is a great pleasure to be with my friend once again, who I always seek out for intelligent analysis and straight talk. And I'm looking forward to continued partnership between our two countries to deal with the wide range of issues that we confront at this time.

So thank you very much.

Chancellor Merkel. Well, I believe you have the possibility to ask questions. Maybe we ought to—do we start with a German question? Mrs. Meier, please.

The President's Visit to Germany/Guantanamo Bay Detainees

Q. Christiane Meier, from the First German Television—Mr. President, did you have the opportunity to also address the issue of Guantanamo, and do you feel sufficiently supported by Europe and here, in particular, by Germany, in accepting prisoners, former prisoners? And does this perhaps overshadow your relationship with the Chancellor or perhaps not? There has been certain mild, sometimes even wild, speculation over the course that your trip took, that you left certain venues open until the end and that this had something to do with your relationship with the Chancellor.

And, Chancellor, did you make an offer or were you actually able as regards Guantanamo to give certain assurances to the President and accommodate him?

President Obama. Well, let me first of all say, I think your characterization of wild speculations is accurate—[*laughter*]—they are very

wild and based on no facts. The truth of the matter is, is that the relationship not only between our two countries but our two Governments is outstanding. Most of the speculation around my schedule here in Germany doesn't take into the account simple logistics: traveling, trying to get from one place to the other, coming off a Middle East trip, having to go to Normandy tomorrow. There are only 24 hours in the day. And so there's nothing to any of that speculation beyond us just trying to fit in what we could do on such a short trip. That's all that there was. So stop it, all of you. [*Laughter*] The—I know you have to find something to report on, but we have more than enough problems out there without manufacturing problems.

In terms of the issue of Guantanamo, look, this is a very difficult issue. It's difficult in my country; it's difficult internationally. We have a facility that contains some people who are very difficult to deal with. Some of them probably should not have been detained in those facilities in the first place. They should have been processed and tried and convicted. If they weren't convicted, then they should not have been languishing in a facility like that; that became a symbol for many around the world of us not sticking to our ideals and our traditions and rule of law.

But it was done, and that's the past. And now we have to move forward. We have spoken to the European Union about the possibilities of working with us and helping us in managing the closure of Guantanamo. Chancellor Merkel has been very open to discussions with us. We have not asked her for hard commitments, and she has not given us any hard commitments beyond having a serious discussion about are there ways that we can solve this problem. And I don't anticipate that it's going to be resolved anytime in the next 2 or 3 months. I think that it's going to be a longer process of evaluation.

But I'm very appreciative of the openness, not only of Chancellor Merkel but other European countries to work with us, because I think they recognize that we have a shared interest in battling extremists and terrorists at the same time as we have a shared interest in upholding broader principles of international justice, and that those things are compatible, but it's going to take some time.

We'll be looking at individual cases, seeing are there people who can safely be transferred; if they are safely transferred, where would they be transferred to. And this is a conversation we're not just having with Germany but the broader European Union. And I very much appreciate the constructive manner in which Chancellor Merkel has approached the issue.

Chancellor Merkel. Allow me, if I may, to, as regards that one part of the question, say that it's fun to work together with the American President because very serious, very thorough, analytical discussions very often lead us to draw the same conclusions. And I think we proved that in London, we proved that in—on previous meetings. I think that's part of our job, isn't it, that you exchange views, different views that you may have also. And wherever it was necessary, we have come to common solutions. So I very much look forward to our future cooperation.

On Guantanamo, Germany has always come out in favor, in particular my Government, for closing down this facility. This has been a longstanding issue. We very purposefully at the time accepted Mr. Kurnaz, who has some sort of relation to Germany. And we also said that is there—when there is a solution in the offing, we will constructively contribute to it. Now there are talks going on of the Minister of the Interior with the American side, very intensive discussions, which we wish to continue. And at the very end, I am absolutely confident that we will find a common solution.

I believe an American question, a question from the American side maybe?

President Obama. [*Inaudible*]—or do I just pick on somebody? Just pick on somebody or——

Q. Mr. President——

President Obama. You know, Jennifer's [Jennifer Loven, Associated Press] got the mike. Sorry, Jake [Jake Tapper, ABC News]. [*Laughter*]

Q. He handed it to me, so I'm going to keep it.

President Obama. There you go.

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. You challenged—on Mideast peace, you challenged all the parties yesterday and again here in your opening remarks to take actions. The Israelis, the Palestinians, the Arab States, things they've been asked to do for years, actually agreed to do, but still today remain even—perhaps even more unwilling or unable to do them. What are your specific next steps to try to break this stalemate? And why do you think your approach is realistic?

And then to Chancellor Merkel, if I could, you talked about a timeline that the two of you discussed on Mideast peace. Can you be more specific about that, please?

President Obama. As I said at the outset of my speech, yesterday was just one speech, and it doesn't replace all the hard work that's going to have to be done—that was done before the speech and is going to have to be done in the years to come in order to solve what has been a 60-year problem. And I'm under no illusions that whatever statements I've put forward somehow are going to supplant the need to do that work.

I think that what is different now is, number one, you're seeing a U.S. administration and American President engage this issue almost on the day that I took office. I mean, we've only been in office 5 months, and yet we've seen extraordinary activity already on this issue. And that's sent a signal to all the parties in the Middle East that we are serious. I've assigned George Mitchell, my special envoy, who has met repeatedly with all the players in the region and who is going to be going back next week in the wake of my appearance in Cairo to follow up with each of the individual parties on a whole host of negotiation points and potential confidence-building measures that can be taken.

And I've already met with Prime Minister Netanyahu. Our Governments are in close contact and communication about how we can move forward on some of the items that might be inhibiting restarting talks. I've had Abbas in the White House to do the same.

And so you've probably seen more sustained activity on this issue in the first 5 months than you would have seen in most previous administrations. The reason we are doing that is because not only had talks ground to a halt, but there was a sense that all sides were getting so dug in and so cynical that you might reach a point where you could never get the parties back at the table. And I think given what we've done so far, we've at least created the space, the atmosphere, in which talks can restart.

Now, I just have to say one more time, the United States can't solve this problem. The United States can be a partner in solving the problem, but ultimately, the parties involved are going to have to make a decision that the prosperity and security of their people is best served by negotiations and compromise, and we can't force them to make those difficult decisions. What we can do is to provide them a framework and a forum and the support for such an outcome to be achieved.

And I'm sure that—one of the things I very much appreciate was Chancellor Merkel's willingness to put the prestige and the resources of the German Government behind that same effort. I think the entire international community is going to have a responsibility to help these parties achieve a hard-won peace that will ultimately be good for everybody's security interests.

Chancellor Merkel. Well, I believe that with the new American administration, with President Barack Obama, there is actually a unique opportunity now to see to it that this peace process, or let's perhaps be more careful, this negotiation process to be revived again.

Yesterday's speech, in a way, opened up also the door to the Arab world again. And in the way that it was described just now, you have sort of made steps along the way. And when steps are made along the way then we feel as Germans we can perhaps be helpful to accompany this. For historical reasons, we have a very close and very special relationship with Israel. We have a very great interest in the safety and security of Israel. And on the other hand, we also have the very fervent wish that a Palestinian state be built.

This agenda needs to be worked on step by step, but it is certainly true, the parties themselves have to show a readiness, a willingness to do something for the peace and security of the world as a whole. I see this as a core issue and an essential and crucial issue. And this is why we all have the wish and the willingness to bring this matter forward. The historical opportunity, I think, is there, even though looking at many, many countries in the Arab world—even looking at many countries in the Arab world, they have a very great interest in progress there because for their economic development, as well, they need peace there, they need security. And we should have every interest in seeing this bring about and we will give our contribution to it.

Herr Scharlack.

The President's Visit to Buchenwald Concentration Camp/Climate Change

Q. Urlich Scharlack, Deutsche Presse-Agentur. You will later on, Mr. President, visit the former concentration camp, Buchenwald. Tell me now, already, if possible, what is your personal motivation, what drives you to this? We were told here in Germany that because you know Elie Wiesel, the Nobel Peace Prize Winner so well, because he told you about his period in the camp where he suffered great hardship, that this sort of made you do it.

And another political issue, if I may, Madam Chancellor, climate change. Germany, Europe are putting concrete targets on the agenda, concrete reduction targets. Will America, in the post-Kyoto process, be willing to commit itself to concrete reduction targets? Or are you pursuing a different kind of approach, Mr. President, similar to you predecessor in office?

President Obama. Well, first of all, one of the main reasons for me being in Europe this week is to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the landing in Normandy. And this is a moment that, obviously, is of great importance to the United States. So many lives were lost during this period; it marks the beginning of the end of World War II, and many of the veterans of World War II are in the sunset of their years. And so having an opportunity to acknowledge them once again and the sacrifices they made was very important to me.

As part of that trip, we thought it was very important for me to visit Buchenwald. First of all, I've never traveled to one of the concentration camps, but this one has a personal connection to me. It's not only that I know Elie Wiesel and have read about his writings, it's also that, and I've stated this before, that my grandfather's—my grandmother's brother was one—was part of the units that first liberated that camp. And I've talked about this before in the United States, perhaps not in Germany, the shock for this very young man—he couldn't have been more than 19 or 20, 21 at the time—was such that he ended up, when he returned, having a very difficult time readjusting to civilian life, and it was a memory that burned in him for quite some time.

And that, you know, was something that I learned about as a young person, and for me then to be able to come and reflect on this very difficult history and to not only reflect on the dangers of when peoples are in conflict and not acknowledging a common humanity, but also to celebrate how out of that tragedy you now have a unified Europe, a Germany that is a very close ally of Israel, and the possibilities of reconciliation and forgiveness and hope. All those things, I think, are part of why this visit is very important to me.

In terms of climate change, ultimately, the world is going to need targets that it can meet. It can't be general, vague approaches. We're going to have to make some tough decisions and take concrete actions if we are going to deal with a potentially cataclysmic disaster. And we are seeing progress in Congress around energy legislation that would set up for the first time in the United States a cap and trade system. That process is moving forward in ways that I think if you had asked political experts 2 or 3 months ago would have seemed impossible. So I'm actually more optimistic than I was about America being able to take leadership on this issue, joining Europe, which over the last several years has been ahead of us on this issue.

As I told Chancellor Merkel, unless the United States and Europe, with our large carbon footprints, per capita carbon footprints,

are willing to take some decisive steps, it's going to be very difficult for us to persuade countries that, on a per capita basis at least, are still much less wealthy, like China or India, to take the steps that they're going to need to take in controlling carbon emissions. So we are very committed to working together and hopeful that we can arrive in Copenhagen having displayed that commitment in concrete ways.

Chancellor Merkel. Allow me, if I may, to say, as to a visit to Buchenwald, that this is for me deeply moving, to see an American President, in this case President Barack Obama, as a visitor in Buchenwald. And he talked about his personal background as regards this question.

Look at Buchenwald. Buchenwald is one example of these horrible concentration camps, liberated by American troops. Later on it was turned during the Soviet period again, and it also—in the time when Germany was divided, it again became somewhat symbolic. People in that part of the country were not able to enjoy freedom and security.

Now, after the end of the cold war, we go there after Germany has been reunited, after Europe has been reunited, now that we also enjoy freedom and democracy, as the United States do. That is very moving, and it shows you that actually history makes things possible if a sufficient number of people believes in the dream of freedom.

Middle East Peace Process/Darfur

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. A couple questions, one just to follow up on Jennifer's. What are some of the gestures of good faith that you'd like to see from the Israelis and Palestinians?

But then regarding your visit to Buchenwald, since the Holocaust, a constant refrain in the United States has been "never again," but U.S. President after U.S. President has sat back and let genocides happen over and over, whether Cambodia or Rwanda. What does "never again" mean to you as a U.S. President, especially given the fact that genocide is going on right now in Darfur? There were accusations of genocide in Sri Lanka a few weeks ago. What does it mean to you? And are you doing everything you can to make sure "never again" is not a hollow refrain?

And then for Chancellor Merkel, does Germany not have an extra obligation to take action to prevent genocide from happening in other parts of the world? Thank you.

President Obama. Good. With respect to confidence-building measures or next steps, again, I'm going to be sending George Mitchell back into the region next week. He's going to be meeting with all the various parties involved. I think I've said publicly and I repeated in the speech some things that are going to have to be done.

You know, a lot of attention has been given to my statement that the Israelis need to stop settlement construction, and I recognize that it's received a lot of attention in Israel as well. Keep in mind that all I've done there is reaffirm commitments that the Israelis themselves had already made in the roadmap. And I recognize the very difficult politics within Israel of getting that done, and I'm very sympathetic to how hard it will be.

But as Israel's friend, the United States, I think, has an obligation to just be honest with that friend about how important it is to achieve a two-state solution, for Israel's national security interests, as well as ours, as well as the Palestinians'. And that's an area where steps can be taken.

They're not the only steps, by the way, that Israel can take and will need to take in order to advance movement towards peace. And I mentioned some of the other issues that I've discussed with Prime Minister Netanyahu's office, for example, increasing freedom of movement within the West Bank, dealing with the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, and allowing reconstruction to proceed more aggressively.

What's been interesting is that less attention has been focused on the insistence on my part that the Palestinians and the Arab States have to take very concrete actions. When it comes to the Palestinians, we know what they're supposed to be doing. They have to continue to make progress on security in the West Bank.

They have to deal with incitement issues. There is still a tendency, even within—among

Palestinians who say they are interested in peace with Israel, to engage in statements that are—that incite a hatred of Israel or are not constructive to the peace process. Now, I think, to his credit, President Abbas has made progress on this issue, but not enough.

We still have not seen a firm commitment from the Palestinian Authority that they can control some of the border areas that Israel is going to be very concerned about if there were to be a two-state solution. There are still problems of corruption and mismanagement within the Authority that have to be addressed.

So there are going to be a whole set of things having to do with the Palestinians' ability to govern effectively and maintain security. And if they're not solved, Israelis are going to have trouble moving forward.

And the Arab States, what I'd like to see is indicators that they are willing, if Israel makes tough commitments, to also make some hard choices that will allow for an opening of commerce, diplomatic exchanges between Israel and its neighbors.

Now, all these things are going to take time. They're not going to happen immediately. But I'm confident that if we stick with it, having started early, that we can make some serious progress this year.

On the issue of genocide, I think "never again" means that the international community has a obligation, even when it's inconvenient, to act when genocide is occurring. So on the issue of Darfur, for example, I didn't simply mention it in a speech yesterday before a Muslim audience, talking about genocide that's taking place within a majority-Muslim country, but I also raised it in discussions with President Mubarak of Egypt, who has strong diplomatic relations with the country of Sudan.

And I've assigned one of my closest national security advisers, General Scott Gration, as a special envoy who has been traveling throughout the region trying to not only solve the immediate humanitarian crisis that exists—and that was made worse when President Bashir kicked out many of the international nongovernmental organizations that had been providing humanitarian assistance. We've been working diligently to solve that immediate problem and get humanitarian assistance back on the ground. But what we've also been doing is to try to reactivate the possibilities of a peaceful—a peace settlement between Khartoum and some of the rebels in Darfur that would allow the internally displaced people from Darfur to start returning to their homes.

So we've been very active on this issue. It may not have received the attention in the press that some of the other issues have, but we are spending a lot of time trying to make sure that we make progress and that the people of Darfur are able to return to their homes and live in peace.

Chancellor Merkel. Well, first, experience—part and parcel of our history, of our past experience here in Germany is obviously the Shoah. And out of that comes an everlasting responsibility for the safety and security of the State of Israel. If you like, this has been the *raison d'etre* of every German Government, ever since the Federal Republic came into being, and it will always be that case.

As regards genocide all over the world, we have an international responsibility that we need to shoulder here. And here, too, we work very closely together. We, all of us, have made the experience, I think, along the way that this quite often takes much longer to resolve than one would like it to be and can be satisfied about.

But military intervention alone, without any political framework that we put on these issues, is also not always successful. We've had—made that experience as well. This is why the European Union, actually during the EU-Africa summit, established very close links with the African Union, trying also to win over African countries to shoulder their responsibility or helping them shoulder their responsibility, for example, by providing them with the necessary materiel, the equipment, but also through political discussions.

I think that due to the experience we've made over the years as European Union members that we were able after the Second World War to live together peacefully. We have an obligation not only to create peace within Europe, because we've been able to do that, but to actually share with others the knowledge how we

managed to get that to happen. Dignity of man is inviolable. This is what is inscribed in the German Constitution. And this goes not only for the Germans, not only for the Europeans, but for every human being all over the world. It means we can solve problems of this kind. We as Germans, after the Second World War, have made an experience that was certainly not a matter of course. The Allies actually extended a helping hand to us, to our neighbor France, the United Kingdom, but also the United States of America. We need to share this experience in order to prevent further cases of tragedy occurring. And we will always be at your side, at the side of the Americans.

Thank you very much.

President Obama. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 10:30 a.m. at Dresden Castle. In his remarks, the President referred to U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George J. Mitchell; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel; President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority; Nobel Prize winner, author, and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel; U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan Maj. Gen. J. Scott Gration, USAF (Ret.); and President Umar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir of Sudan. He also referred to his great uncle Charles Payne. Chancellor Merkel referred to former Guantanamo detainee Murat Kurnaz, who was released into German custody in August 2006; and Minister of Interior Wolfgang Schaeuble of Germany. Chancellor Merkel and some reporters spoke in German, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks Following a Tour of Buchenwald Concentration Camp in Weimar, Germany

June 5, 2009

Chancellor Merkel and I have just finished our tour here at Buchenwald. I want to thank Dr. Volkhard Knigge, who gave an outstanding account of what we were witnessing. I am particularly grateful to be accompanied by my friend Elie Wiesel, as well as Mr. Bertrand Herz, both of whom are survivors of this place.

We saw the area known as Little Camp, where Elie and Bertrand were sent as boys. In fact, at the place that commemorates this camp, there is a photograph in which we can see a 16-year-old Elie in one of the bunks along with the others. We saw the ovens of the crematorium, the guard towers, the barbed wire fences, the foundations of barracks that once held people in the most unimaginable conditions.

We saw the memorial to all the survivors, a steel plate, as Chancellor Merkel said, that is heated to 37 degrees Celsius, the temperature of the human body, a reminder—where people were deemed inhuman because of their differences—of the mark that we all share.

Now, these sights have not lost their horror with the passage of time. As we were walking up, Elie said, "If these trees could talk." And there's a certain irony about the beauty of the landscape and the horror that took place here. More than half a century later, our grief and our outrage over what happened have not diminished. I will not forget what I've seen here today.

I've known about this place since I was a boy, hearing stories about my great uncle, who was a very young man serving in World War II. He was part of the 89th Infantry Division, the first Americans to reach a concentration camp. They liberated Ohrdruf, one of Buchenwald's subcamps.

And I told this story. He returned from his service in a state of shock, saying little and isolating himself for months on end from family and friends, alone with the painful memories that would not leave his head. And as we see—as we saw some of the images here, it's understandable that someone who witnessed what had taken place here would be in a state of shock.

My great uncle's commander, General Eisenhower, understood this impulse to

silence. He had seen the piles of bodies and starving survivors and deplorable conditions that the American soldiers found when they arrived, and he knew that those who witnessed these things might be too stunned to speak about them or be able—be unable to find the words to describe them, that they might be rendered mute in the way my great uncle had. And he knew that what had happened here was so unthinkable that after the bodies had been taken away, that perhaps no one would believe it.

And that's why he ordered American troops and Germans from the nearby town to tour the camp. He invited Congressmen and journalists to bear witness and ordered photographs and films to be made. And he insisted on viewing every corner of these camps so that, and I quote, he could "be in a position to give first-hand evidence of these things if ever in the future there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to propaganda."

We are here today because we know this work is not yet finished. To this day, there are those who insist that the Holocaust never happened, a denial of fact and truth that is baseless and ignorant and hateful. This place is the ultimate rebuke to such thoughts, a reminder of our duty to confront those who would tell lies about our history.

Also to this day, there are those who perpetuate every form of intolerance—racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, xenophobia, sexism, and more—hatred that degrades its victims and diminishes us all. In this century, we've seen genocide. We've seen mass graves and the ashes of villages burned to the ground, children used as soldiers and rape used as a weapon of war. This place teaches us that we must be ever vigilant about the spread of evil in our own time, that we must reject the false comfort that others' suffering is not our problem and commit ourselves to resisting those who would subjugate others to serve their own interests.

But as we reflect today on the human capacity for evil and our shared obligation to defy it, we're also reminded of the human capacity for good. For amidst the countless acts of cruelty that took place here, we know that there were many acts of courage and kindness as well: the Jews who insisted on fasting on Yom Kippur; the camp cook who hid potatoes in the lining of his prison uniform and distributed them to his fellow inmates, risking his own life to help save theirs; the prisoners who organized a special effort to protect the children here, sheltering them from work and giving them extra food. They set up secret classrooms, some of the inmates, and taught history and math and urged the children to think about their future professions. And we were just hearing about the resistance that formed and the irony that the base for the resistance was in the latrine areas because the guards found it so offensive that they wouldn't go there. And so out of the filth, that became a space in which small freedoms could thrive.

When the American GIs arrived, they were astonished to find more than 900 children still alive, and the youngest was just 3 years old. And I'm told that a couple of the prisoners even wrote a Buchenwald song that many here sang. Among the lyrics were these: ". . . whatever our fate, we will say yes to life, for the day will come when we are free . . . in our blood we carry the will to live and in our hearts, in our hearts faith."

These individuals never could have known that the world would one day speak of this place. They could not have known that some of them would live to have children and grandchildren who would grow up hearing their stories and would return here so many years later to find a museum and memorials and the clock tower set permanently to 3:15, the moment of liberation.

They could not have known how the nation of Israel would rise out of the destruction of the Holocaust and the strong, enduring bonds between that great nation and my own. And they could not have known that one day an American President would visit this place and speak of them and that he would do so standing side by side with the German Chancellor in a Germany that is now a vibrant democracy and a valued American ally.

They could not have known these things. But, still, surrounded by death they willed themselves to hold fast to life. In their hearts, they still had faith that evil would not triumph

in the end, that while history is unknowable it arches towards progress, and that the world would one day remember them. And it is now up to us, the living, in our work, wherever we are, to resist injustice and intolerance and indifference in whatever forms they may take and ensure that those who were lost here did not go in vain. It is up to us to redeem that faith. It is up to us to bear witness, to ensure that the continues—the world continues to note what happened here, to remember all those who survived and all those who perished, and to remember them not just as victims, but also as individuals who hoped and loved and dreamed just like us.

And just as we identify with the victims, it's also important for us, I think, to remember that the perpetrators of such evil were human as well, and that we have to guard against cruelty in ourselves. And I wanted to express particular thanks to Chancellor Merkel and the German people, because it's not easy to look into the past in this way and acknowledge it and make something of it, make a determination that they will stand guard against acts like this happening again.

Rather than have me end with my remarks, I thought it was appropriate to have Elie Wiesel provide some reflection and some thought as he returns here so many years later to the place where his father died.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:58 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany; Volkhard Knigge, director, Buchenwald Memorial; and Nobel Prize winner, author, and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel; and Holocaust survivor Bertrand Herz. He also referred to his great uncle Charles Payne. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Chancellor Merkel and Mr. Wiesel. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

The President's News Conference With President Nicolas Sarkozy of France in Caen, France
June 6, 2009

President Sarkozy. Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon to all of you. Welcome. I would like to say to the President of the United States of America how proud France is to welcome him for the second time this year.

This afternoon we will be talking about the ceremonies and the commemoration of the D-Day landings, but I want to say in the strongest, most sincere terms that never in the history, perhaps, of our two countries, the United States and France have been so close to one another on major issues, major questions.

I said to the President that we are determined to help him in his decision to close down—shut down Guantanamo. I told President Barack Obama to what extent we support his open, outstretched hand initiative to Russia. We approve and endorse this policy.

I said to the President that we totally agreed with him on the Israeli and Palestinian issue: two states that need to live alongside one another, an Israeli state, whose security we're very attached to, and a secure Palestinian state, and to what extent we support American diplomacy when it requested that an end, a stop, and a halt be put to settlements.

On the Iranian matter, I've said this in very frank and open terms to the Iranian Foreign Secretary, how important it is that he take the hand outstretched by President Obama, that we—we, France, Europe, and United States—are totally aligned on this, and we cannot in any way accept the insane statements made by President Ahmadi-nejad.

On North Korea, we have total convergence of views with the American President. And of course, France is delighted to have fully reintegrated NATO, as I said to the American President.

So really it is a pleasure to work with Barack Obama. We work regularly together. He knows that France is a friend of the United States. We basically coordinate on all major issues, and we are determined to continue that.

Barack, welcome. Welcome to your family.

President Obama. Well, it's wonderful to be back in France, particularly on this day, because this day marks not only the triumph of freedom, but it also marks how the transatlantic alliance has allowed for extraordinary prosperity and security on both sides of the Atlantic. The fact that France fully reintegrated into NATO this year, under President Sarkozy's leadership, is just one further indication of the degree to which U.S.-French cooperation can help to underpin not only security in Europe but also a more secure and prosperous world beyond Europe.

I've very much appreciated President Sarkozy's leadership on a whole range of issues. He mentioned a number of them: France's leadership within Europe in understanding the need for us to have tough diplomacy with the Iranians, to reach out to them, but also insist that we can't afford a nuclear arms race in the Middle East; our close collaboration on a whole host of issues with Russia; France's willingness to accept a Guantanamo detainee, but more broadly, to help us as we want to deal with the terrorist threat, but do so in a way that is consistent with our values and our ideals; the assistance that all NATO allies, as well as others, are providing in helping to bring about a more peaceful and democratic Afghanistan.

On all of these issues, President Sarkozy has not just cooperated, he's led. And that kind of approach, I think, is serving the interests of France, but it's also serving the interests of the world. And we're very grateful for that.

Obviously, I also want to make mention of the extraordinary tragedy of the Air France plane that we believe may have gone down. We don't know yet what exactly happened, but it is heartbreaking, obviously, for the families, who the American people offer thoughts and prayers. We have already authorized all of our resources to coordinate with the French in trying to discover where the plane went down and to find as much information as possible. But our deepest condolences to the people of France, most particularly to the families involved. And we are determined to find out what happened and support France in that regard.

So with that, I think that we can take a question.

Middle East Peace Process/Iran

Q. Mr. President, concerning——

Interpreter. Excuse me, the journalist is speaking without a microphone.

President Obama. I'm sorry. Apparently, you're speaking without a microphone, so the translator cannot hear you. Do we have a mike anywhere? Now he's got the microphone.

Q. Yes, right here, Mr. President. Sorry. You said yesterday that you hoped to see significant progress in the Middle East by the end of this year. What did you mean by that?

And, President Sarkozy, you had a meeting earlier this week with the Iranian Foreign Minister. What message was he able to give you to pass on to the President? Thank you.

President Obama. Okay. I think all of us understand what would constitute progress when it comes to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Progress would mean that the parties involved, supported by not just the United States, not just by France, but also other Arab States, are in serious, constructive negotiations about how to achieve a two-state solution.

I don't expect that a 60-year problem is solved overnight, but as I said before, I do expect both sides to recognize that their fates are tied together, and that it is in the interests of Israel, its security interests, as well as the interests of the Palestinians to resolve this in a peaceful way.

Now, there are a whole host of difficult questions out there. We all know what those questions are. But I believe President Sarkozy and I agree that we have to move beyond the current stalemate. Both sides are going to have obligations. I've discussed the importance of a cessation of settlement construction, but I also want to reemphasize, because that's gotten more attention than what I've also said, which is the Palestinians have to renounce violence, end incitement, improve their governance capacity so that Israelis can be confident that the Palestinians can follow through on any commitments they make across the table.

Now, I cannot impose such negotiations or, certainly, the terms of a final settlement on the

parties. That's their task. President Sarkozy cannot impose peace in that region. But what we can do is to be friends to Israel, honest in our assessments of what it's going to take, hold the Palestinians accountable for their end of the bargain, and move the process forward. And we are going to try to put as much energy as we can into it. My special envoy, George Mitchell, is going to be returning to the region this week, and we are going to systematically work through as many of these issues as possible.

One last point I want to emphasize: The Arab States have to be a part of this process. It's not sufficient just to point at the Palestinian problem and then say we are not going to engage, we're not going to take responsibility. They are going to have to step up as well because the Arab States not only are important politically, they're also important economically. And to the extent that they put their shoulder behind the wheel, that can move the process forward in a significant way.

President Sarkozy. It is not for me to speak for the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran. I can tell you what I told him. I said to him, number one, that he had to take the hand stretched out by Barack Obama and set a meeting so that the group of six, the six-party talks start again; secondly, that we all were aligned if Iran wants access to civilian nuclear energy; it is entitled to that, but if it wants nuclear—military nuclear, the answer is no. And you have to understand this fair and square.

I said, if your interests are peaceful, then accept controls. We cannot accept the Iranian leader to make extremely aggressive statements on the one hand, and IAEA checks and controls not to go—be accepted by the Iranians and, at the same time, to give them access to civilian nuclear energy.

Again, France and the United States are working hand in glove on this one. Iran is a great nation, a great civilization. We want peace, we want dialog, and we want to help them develop. But we do not want nuclear—military nuclear weapons to spread, and we are clear on that.

European-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, there were a lot of comments in France and Germany recently on the fact that you stayed only briefly in these two countries, and that you haven't spent much private time aside—outside of the official engagements here. Does that mean that Europe is not a priority—on your priority list or diplomatic list? Or what would you have to say on the subject?

President Obama. What it means is that I have a very tough schedule. I would love nothing more than to have a leisurely week in Paris, stroll down the Seine, take my wife out to a nice meal, have a picnic in Luxembourg Gardens. [*Laughter*] Those days are over, for the moment.

And so I think it's very important to understand that good friends don't worry about the symbols and the conventions and the protocols. The United States is a critical friend and ally of France, and vice versa. I personally consider Nicolas Sarkozy a friend; I think he feels the same way. And so since I know I can always pick up the phone and talk to him, that it's not necessary for me to spend huge amounts of time other than just getting business done when I'm here.

At some point I will be the ex-President, and then you will find me in France, I'm sure, quite a bit, having fun. I said the same thing in Germany yesterday, where they were asking, "Well, you know, you didn't have an overnight here, or this"—I think you guys are reading too much into my schedule.

My main issue has to do with the fact that when I take these foreign trips, it's to get business done, because I also have an economy where the unemployment rate is 9.4 percent. We still have to pass financial regulations that will prevent the kind of crisis that we've seen from happening again. That all requires a lot of work, and so my travel schedule is always limited.

President Sarkozy. Well, in a democracy, one has to accept all criticism and all comments. And let me tell you very sincerely, do you think that we don't have enough on our plate to do without spending time to have our

pictures taken, what with the unemployment rate in France, the United States, the Western world, what with the Iranian issues? Do you think our prime concern is what glossy magazine we'll be pictured in, or what restaurant we're going to go and spend an evening in, or whether we spend an extra night here or not?

Well, what does friendship mean? Friendship means that when the United States say we're going to shut down Guantanamo, we say, well, we'll help you; we'll have some of the detainees in France. Friendship is what? It's coming back into NATO and taking two important command posts in the integrated structure. That is what friendship is all about. We're here to work together to achieve results. We're not here, watch in hand, saying, "How much time did you spend with so-and-so?" I understand that you should put the question, but frankly, do you think people are just waiting to see us hand in hand sitting here looking into one another's eyes? Of course not.

They want us to achieve results on Iran, on North Korea, on whatever it is, but where we're in total harmony. See, I'll tell you one thing: It's very easy to work with the United States of American President.

President Obama. It's also because President Sarkozy speaks quite quickly, so we can get even more done. [*Laughter*]

President Sarkozy. I speak fast, but you understand fast.

President Obama. We'll take one last question. We've got a mike over here?

Religious Freedom Around the World/Turkey

Q. Arnaud Leparmentier, Le Monde. President Obama, the ban on headscarves and veils for young girls in French schools and the President Sarkozy's position on Turkey's entry into the European Union, is this likely to hinder the new approach to Islam that you presented in Cairo two days ago?

President Obama. Well, I think that this is a process. And what I tried to do in Cairo was to open up a conversation both in the Muslim communities, but also in non-Muslim communities, both in the Middle East, but also here in the West.

And as I said in the speech, I think that freedom of religious expression is critical. That is part of our liberal tradition both in France and the United States, and that we should not have two standards for freedom of religious expression, one for Muslims and one for non-Muslims.

That doesn't mean that each country isn't going to be working through these issues with its own history and its own sensitivities in mind. And I don't take responsibility for how other countries are going to approach this. I will tell you that in the United States, our basic attitude is, is that we're not going to tell people what to wear. If, in their exercise of religion, they are impeding somebody else's rights, that's something that we would, obviously, be concerned about.

But my general view is, is that the most effective way to integrate people of all faiths is to not try to suppress their customs or traditions, rather to open up opportunities and give them a chance for full participation in the life of their country.

With respect to Turkey, President Sarkozy and I have discussed this before. I am not a member of the EU—the United States is not a member of the EU, and so we can't dictate the terms in which any country enters into the EU. I do think that Turkey is a enormously important ally in NATO. They're helping us in Afghanistan, in that critical effort. They have a growing economy. They are interested in further integration with Europe, and I would encourage that. So I've said publicly that I think Turkish membership in the EU would be important.

Now, President Sarkozy, as an actual member of the EU, has a different view. But I think it's very important to note that he strongly supports the work that Turkey is doing in NATO. I believe that he's interested in further economic integration. And what the United States wants to do is just to continue to encourage discussions and talks and a process whereby Turkey can feel confident that it has a friendship with France, with the United States, with all of Europe, and that it—to the extent that it's defining itself as part of Europe, that it has an opportunity to be a part. But, again, that's something that's going to have to move forward not based

on what the United States says, but rather a dialog between the European Union members and Turkey.

In all of this, I think Europe and France has a critical role to play, just as the United States does, in sending a message to Muslims around the world that we welcome and want their participation in a world community that is peaceful, that is prosperous, that is economically integrated, that is developing on behalf of all people and not just some people.

And in both France and in the United States, we have enormous Muslim populations. So as I said in the Cairo speech, there's no contradiction between America and Islam because we have Muslim Americans who actually have higher education and income averages than is the average in the United States. That's a testament to the degree to which they've been able to succeed, thrive, remain true to their religion, and be full-fledged, patriotic Americans. And that kind of approach, I think, is the one that we want, as opposed to an approach that increases tensions both within our borders and outside of our borders.

Q. Does the U.S. press have equal time, because they've had two.

President Obama. That was a very self-serving—[*laughter*]. I'm teasing. Go ahead.

President Sarkozy. Perhaps I could just say a few words on this. First of all, I thought that President Obama's speech was a remarkable speech. And we have long been awaiting to hear the United States of America, the world's number-one power, shouldering its full share of responsibility in avoiding the clash of cultures and civilizations between East and West. And I totally agree with what President Obama said, including on headscarves and veils.

But let me simply say two things. In France, any young girl, any girl who wishes to wear a veil or a headscarf may do so; it's her free choice to do so. We simply set two limits because we are a secular state. That is that the—that civil servants who are actually on duty must not have—must not show any sign of their religious belief, be they Jewish, Orthodox, Muslim, Protestant, Catholic, you name it. That's what we call a totally impartial, secular administration. In other words, when on duty at the actual counters where they work, there must be no visible sign of whatever religion they belong to. Secondly, the fact that young girls may choose to wear a veil or a headscarf is not a problem for as long as they have actually chosen to do so, as opposed to this being imposed upon them, be it by their families or by their environment.

In a country like France, where everyone can live according to their convictions and beliefs, we respect the individual, we respect women, we respect the family. I've also done a lot when I was home secretary, Minister of the Interior, to ensure that the Muslim community in France could practice their religion and their creed like any other—any other religion or creed in France.

Now, you belong to a newspaper I have a lot of respect for, which called for its readers to vote in the Presidential election for my adversary and not for me. And what would you say to justify this? You said, "Well, be careful, President Sarkozy is going to align us too much on the United States of America." And 2 yeas later, what are you telling me? You're telling me, "There's one subject on which President Obama and President Sarkozy don't agree." That should reassure you, Mr. Leparmentier. You should be happy about that now.

Of course, we agree, we concur on the ultimate objective. What is President Obama's objective? What is mine, ultimately? It is that Turkey may play its full part, its essential role as a bridge between East and West. That is an essential role. Where there is a difference, it's how to go about doing this. The traditional position of the United States of America is the integration of Turkey. This was President Bush's position, President Clinton's position, the position of all United States Presidents. Mine you are familiar with: It is not integration into the European Union, not accession into the European Union. But I did suggest that we Europeans, together with the Russians and together with the Turks, does think about having a common economic and security area. We have no divergence as to objective, the objective we're seeking to achieve, simply the way of going about it.

Turkey—the objective is Turkey play its role as a bridge between East and West. I said to President Obama, I think it's important that Europe has borders, have frontiers, because that is a stabilizing factor. And I cannot allow that stabilizing factor in the world to be undermined. That doesn't mean that we have to push back Turkey into the darkness. Turkey is a strong ally. Turkey is a bridge between different worlds. The only issue is how to go about achieving that. That's what we talked about.

So let us have at least one point on which we are totally—not totally in agreement, and that will give us time to think about future elections.

Iran/North Korea

Q. My question is for both Presidents, please. On Iran and North Korea, what has the current policy, which is largely the same as the ones of recent years, produced other than giving time to North Korea and Iran to advance their nuclear ambitions? Thank you.

President Obama. Well, I think it's important to distinguish between the two countries and what they've been doing of late.

North Korea's actions over the last several months have been extraordinarily provocative, and they have made no bones about the fact that they are testing nuclear weapons, testing missiles that potentially would have intercontinental capacity. And, in fact, we are not intending to continue a policy of rewarding provocation. The parties that are involved in the six-party talks we have contacted; they issued very clear statements and are now in the process of working on a very clear resolution condemning North Korea's actions. You haven't seen China and Russia respond as forcefully in the past on these issues, because I think there's an indication that they recognize how destabilizing North Korea's actions have been.

My preference is always to use a diplomatic approach. But diplomacy has to involve the other side engaging in a serious way in trying to solve problems. And we have not seen that kind of reaction from North Korea. So we will continue to consult with our allies. We'll continue to consult with all the parties who previously have been involved in the six-party talks. But we are going to take a very hard look at how we move forward on these issues, and I don't think that there should be an assumption that we will simply continue down a path in which North Korea is constantly destabilizing the region, and we can just react in the same ways by, after they've done these things for a while, then we reward them.

Now, with respect to Iran, I've made very clear that we are not taking the same position. I mean, I'm curious that you would suggest that we're taking the same approach when I'm spending an awful lot of time back home answering people who are concerned that what we're doing is too radical. I mean, we are breaking significantly from past approaches, and we are saying we are willing to have direct negotiations with the Iranians on a whole range of issues without preconditions, in an atmosphere of mutual respect and resolve.

Like President Sarkozy, my view is that Iran's possession of a nuclear weapon would be profoundly dangerous, not just to the United States, not just to Israel, but to the entire region and, over time, the entire world. Because there's no possibility that Iran gets a nuclear weapon in which you don't see a whole host of countries in the Middle East decide, "We've got to go for it as well."

This is part of the reason, by the way, when it comes to North Korea and Iran, that I've said it's not sufficient for the United States or France or other members of the nuclear club simply to say, "All of you have to stop, but we're not going to do anything to change ourselves."

I gave a speech in Prague in which I said all of us have responsibilities; that I am going to be traveling to Moscow for a summit to restart significant arms—nuclear arms reduction negotiations with the Russians; that I want to reinvigorate our nonproliferation treaty. I think we should create a stable consensus in which countries who want peaceful—or nuclear power for peaceful civilian use are able to do so, and that our goal collectively is to eliminate proliferation, lock down loose nuclear materials that are out there, negotiate a whole series of treaties that lower the temperature, and ultimately, make nuclear weapons obsolete.

Now, that's not going to happen in my time, my lifetime; it won't happen in President

Sarkozy's lifetime. But if we start moving on that pathway and other countries can look and say, "The United States is not just talking the talk, but it's walking the walk," then I think that will indicate to the Iranians, for example, that the goal here is not to single them out per se; it's to suggest that this is dangerous for everybody, including them. Their security interests will not be served by possession of a nuclear weapon.

The last point I'd make on Iran, the Supreme Leader has said, "We don't want nuclear weapons; that's not what we're pursuing." I'm happy to hope that that's true, but in international relations, I can't just base things on hope, especially when you see actions to the contrary.

My—one of my famous predecessors, Ronald Reagan, I think, said it pretty well when he said, "Trust, but verify." And we're not even to the point yet where we're having those conversations with the Iranians. But ultimately, if in fact Iran does not seek nuclear weapons, then it shouldn't be that hard for us to have a series of negotiations in which the international community feels that confidence and in which Iran then is able to enjoy a whole host of economic and political benefits and gains much greater legitimacy in all of its other endeavors.

President Sarkozy. Okay. *Merci*. Thank you.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

President Obama. You already got a whole interview. Thank you, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 1:06 p.m. at the Prefecture. In his remarks, the President referred to former Guantanamo detainee Lakhdar Boumediene, who was released into French custody in May; U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George J. Mitchell; and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khamenei of Iran. President Sarkozy referred to Minister of Foreign Affairs Manuchehr Motaki of Iran. President Sarkozy and some reporters spoke in French, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

The President's Weekly Address
June 6, 2009

Over the past few days, I've been traveling through the Middle East and Europe working to renew our alliances, enhance our common security, and propose a new partnership between the United States and the Muslim world.

But even as I'm abroad, I'm firmly focused on the other pressing challenges we face, including the urgent need to reform our health care system. Even as we speak, Congress is preparing to introduce and debate health reform legislation that is the product of many months of effort and deliberation. And if you're like any of the Americans I've met across this country, who know all too well that the soaring costs of health care make our current course unsustainable, I imagine you'll be watching their progress closely.

I'm talking about the families I've met whose spiraling premiums and out-of-pocket expenses are pushing them into bankruptcy or forcing them to go without the check-ups or prescriptions they need; business owners who fear they'll be forced to choose between keeping their doors open or covering their workers; Americans who rightly worry that the ballooning costs of Medicare and Medicaid could lead to fiscal catastrophe down the road. Simply put, the status quo is broken.

We cannot continue this way. If we do nothing, everyone's health care will be put in jeopardy. Within a decade, we'll spend $1 out of every 5 we earn on health care, and we'll keep getting less for our money. And that's why fixing what's wrong with our health care system is no longer a luxury we hope to achieve; it's a necessity we cannot postpone any longer.

The growing consensus around that reality has led an unprecedented coalition to come together for change. Unlike past attempts at reforming our health care system, everyone is at the table, patients' advocates and health insurers, business and labor, Democrats and Republicans alike.

A few weeks ago, some of these improbable allies committed to cut national health care

spending by $2 trillion over the next decade. What makes this so remarkable is that it probably wouldn't have happened just a few short years ago. But today, at this historic juncture, even old adversaries are united around the same goal: quality, affordable health care for all Americans.

Now, I know that when you bring together disparate groups with differing views, there will be lively debate, and that's a debate I welcome. But what we can't accept is reform that just invests more money in the status quo, reform that throws good money after bad habits.

Instead we must attack the root causes of skyrocketing health care costs. Some of these costs are the result of unwarranted profiteering that has no place in our health care system, and in too many communities, folks are paying higher costs without receiving better care in return. And yet we know, for example, that there are places like the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota, the Cleveland Clinic in Ohio, and other institutions that offer some of the highest quality of care in the Nation at some of the lowest costs in the Nation. We should learn from their successes and promote the best practices, not the most expensive ones. That's how we'll achieve reform that fixes what doesn't work and builds on what does.

This week, I conveyed to Congress my belief that any health care reform must be built around fundamental reforms that lower costs, improve quality and coverage, and also protect consumer choice. And that means if you like the plan you have, you can keep it. If you like the doctor you have, you can keep your doctor too. The only change you'll see are falling costs as our reforms take hold.

I've also made it very clear to Congress that we must develop a plan that doesn't add to our budget deficit. My budget included a historic downpayment on reform, and we'll work with Congress to fully cover the costs through rigorous spending reductions and appropriate additional revenues. We'll eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse in our health care system, but we'll also take on key causes of rising costs, saving billions while providing better care to the American people.

Now, all across America, our families are making hard choices when it comes to health care. Now, it's time for Washington to make the right ones. It's time to deliver. And I am absolutely convinced that if we keep working together and living up to our mutual responsibilities, if we place the American people's interests above the special interests, we will seize this historic opportunity to finally fix what ails our broken health care system and strengthen our economy and our country now and for decades to come.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 1 p.m., e.d.t., on June 2 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast on June 6. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 5 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m., e.d.t., on June 6. Due to the 6-hour time difference, the address was released after the President's remarks in Caen, France.

Remarks on the 65th Anniversary of D-Day in Normandy, France
June 6, 2009

Good afternoon. Thank you, President Sarkozy, Prime Minister Brown, Prime Minister Harper, and Prince Charles for being here today. Thank you to our Secretary of Veterans Affairs, General Eric Shinseki, for making the trip out here to join us. Thanks also to Susan Eisenhower, whose grandfather began this mission 65 years ago with a simple charge: "Ok, let's go," and to a World War II veteran who returned home from this war to serve a proud and distinguished career as a United States Senator and a national leader, Bob Dole.

I'm not the first American President to come and mark this anniversary, and I likely will not be the last. This is an event that has long brought to this coast both heads of state and grateful citizens, veterans and their loved ones, the liberated and their liberators. It's been written about and spoken of and depicted in countless books and films and speeches. And

long after our time on this Earth has passed, one word will still bring forth the pride and awe of men and women who will never meet the heroes who sit before us: D-Day.

Why is this? Of all the battles in all the wars across the span of human history, why does this day hold such a revered place in our memory? What is it about the struggle that took place on the sands a few short steps from here that brings us back to remember year after year after year? Part of it, I think, is the size of the odds that weighed against success. For three centuries, no invader had ever been able to cross the English Channel into Normandy, and it had never been more difficult than in 1944.

That was the year that Hitler ordered his top field marshal to fortify the Atlantic Wall against a seaborne invasion. From the tip of Norway to southern France, the Nazis lined steep cliffs with machine guns and artillery. Low-lying areas were flooded to block passage. Sharpened poles awaited paratroopers. Mines were laid on the beaches and beneath the water. And by the time of the invasion, half a million Germans waited for the Allies along the coast between Holland and northern France.

At dawn on June 6th, the Allies came. The best chance for victory had been for the British Royal air corps to take out the guns on the cliffs while airborne divisions parachuted behind enemy lines. But all did not go according to plan. Paratroopers landed miles from their mark, while the fog and clouds prevented Allied planes from destroying the guns on the cliffs. So when the ships landed here at Omaha, an unimaginable hell rained down on the men inside. Many never made it out of the boats.

And yet, despite all of this, one by one, the Allied forces made their way to shore, here and at Utah and Juno, Gold and Sword. They were American, British, and Canadian. Soon, the paratroopers found each other and fought their way back. The Rangers scaled the cliffs. And by the end of the day, against all odds, the ground on which we stand was free once more. The sheer improbability of this victory is part of what makes D-Day so memorable. It also arises from the clarity of purpose with which this war was waged.

We live in a world of competing beliefs and claims about what is true. It's a world of varied religions and cultures and forms of government. In such a world, it's all too rare for a struggle to emerge that speaks to something universal about humanity. The Second World War did that. No man who shed blood or lost a brother would say that war is good, but all know that this war was essential. For what we faced in Nazi totalitarianism was not just a battle of competing interests; it was a competing vision of humanity. Nazi ideology sought to subjugate and humiliate and exterminate. It perpetrated murder on a massive scale, fueled by a hatred of those who were deemed different and therefore inferior. It was evil.

The nations that joined together to defeat Hitler's Reich were not perfect. They had made their share of mistakes, had not always agreed with one another on every issue. But whatever God we prayed to, whatever our differences, we knew that the evil we faced had to be stopped. Citizens of all faiths and of no faith came to believe that we could not remain as bystanders to the savage perpetration of death and destruction. And so we joined and sent our sons to fight and often die so that men and women they never met might know what it is to be free.

In America, it was an endeavor that inspired a nation to action. A President who asked his country to pray on D-Day also asked its citizens to serve and sacrifice to make the invasion possible. On farms and in factories, millions of men and women worked three shifts a day, month after month, year after year. Trucks and tanks came from plants in Michigan and Indiana, New York and Illinois. Bombers and fighter planes rolled off assembly lines in Ohio and Kansas, where my grandmother did her part as an inspector. Shipyards on both coasts produced the largest fleet in history, including the landing craft from New Orleans that eventually made it here to Omaha.

But despite all the years of planning and preparation, despite the inspiration of our leaders, the skill of our generals, the strength

of our firepower, and the unyielding support from our home front, the outcome of the entire struggle would ultimately rest on the success of one day in June.

Lyndon Johnson once said that there are certain moments when "history and fate meet at a single time in a single place to shape a turning point in man's unending search for freedom." And D-Day was such a moment. One newspaper noted that "we have come to the hour for which we were born." Had the Allies failed here, Hitler's occupation of this continent might have continued indefinitely. Instead, victory here secured a foothold in France. It opened a path to Berlin. It made possible the achievements that followed the liberation of Europe: the Marshall plan, the NATO alliance, the shared prosperity and security that flowed from each.

It was unknowable then, but so much of the progress that would define the 20th century, on both sides of the Atlantic, came down to a battle for a slice of beach only 6 miles long and 2 miles wide. More particularly, it came down to the men who landed here, those who now rest in this place for eternity and those who are with us here today.

Perhaps more than any other reason, you, the veterans of that landing, are why we still remember what happened on D-Day. You're why we keep coming back. For you remind us that in the end, human destiny is not determined by forces beyond our control. You remind us that our future is not shaped by mere chance or circumstance. Our history has always been the sum total of the choices made and the actions taken by each individual man and woman. It has always been up to us.

You could have done what Hitler believed you would do when you arrived here. In the face of a merciless assault from these cliffs, you could have idled the boats offshore. Amid a barrage of tracer bullets that lit the night sky, you could have stayed in those planes. You could have hid in the hedgerows or waited behind the seawall. You could have done only what was necessary to ensure your own survival.

But that's not what you did. That's not the story you told on D-Day. Your story was written by men like Zane Schlemmer of the 82d Airborne, who parachuted into a dark marsh, far from his objective and his men. Lost and alone, he still managed to fight his way through the gunfire and help liberate the town in which he landed, a town where a street now bears his name.

It's a story written by men like Anthony Ruggiero, an Army Ranger who saw half the men on his landing craft drown when it was hit by shellfire just a thousand yards off this beach. He spent 3 hours in freezing water and was 1 of only 90 Rangers to survive out of the 225 who were sent to scale the cliffs.

And it's a story written by so many who are no longer with us, like Carlton Barrett. Private Barrett was only supposed to serve as a guide for the 1st Infantry Division, but he instead became one of its heroes. After wading ashore in neck-deep water, he returned to the water again and again and again to save his wounded and drowning comrades. And under the heaviest possible enemy fire, he carried them to safety. He carried them in his own arms.

This is the story of the Allied victory. It's the legend of units like Easy Company and the All-American 82d. It's the tale of the British people, whose courage during the Blitz forced Hitler to call off the invasion of England; the Canadians, who came even though they were never attacked; the Russians, who sustained some of the war's heaviest casualties on the Eastern front; and all those French men and women who would rather have died resisting tyranny than lived within its grasp.

It is the memories that have been passed on to so many of us about the service or sacrifice of a friend or relative. For me, it is my grandfather, Stanley Dunham, who arrived on this beach 6 weeks after D-Day and marched across Europe in Patton's army. And it is my great uncle who was part of the first American division to reach and liberate a Nazi concentration camp. His name is Charles Payne, and I'm so proud that he's with us here today.

I know this trip doesn't get any easier as the years pass, but for those of you who make it, there's nothing that could keep you away. One such veteran, a man named Jim Norene, was a member of the 502d Parachute Infantry Division of the 101st Airborne. Last night, after

visiting this cemetery for one last time, he passed away in his sleep. Jim was gravely ill when he left his home, and he knew that he might not return. But just as he did 65 years ago, he came anyway. May he now rest in peace with the boys he once bled with, and may his family always find solace in the heroism he showed here.

In the end, Jim Norene came back to Normandy for the same reason we all come back. He came for the reason articulated by Howard Huebner, another former paratrooper who is here with us today. When asked why he made the trip, Howard said, "It's important that we tell our stories. It doesn't have to be something big . . . just a little story about what happened so people don't forget"—so people don't forget.

Friends and veterans, we cannot forget. What we must not forget is that D-Day was a time and a place where the bravery and selflessness of a few was able to change the course of an entire century. At an hour of maximum danger, amid the bleakest of circumstances, men who thought themselves ordinary found within themselves the ability to do something extraordinary. They fought for their moms and sweethearts back home, for the fellow warriors they came to know as brothers. And they fought out of a simple sense of duty, a duty sustained by the same ideals for which their countrymen had once fought and bled for over two centuries.

That is the story of Normandy, but also the story of America, of the Minutemen who gathered on a green in Lexington, of the Union boys from Maine who repelled a charge at Gettysburg, of the men who gave their last full measure of devotion at Inchon and Khe Sanh, of all the young men and women whose valor and goodness still carry forward this legacy of service and sacrifice. It's a story that has never come easy, but one that always gives us hope. For as we face down the hardships and struggles of our time and arrive at that hour for which we were born, we cannot help but draw strength from those moments in history when the best among us were somehow able to swallow their fears and secure a beachhead on an unforgiving shore.

To those men who achieved that victory 65 years ago, we thank you for your service. May God bless you, and may God bless the memory of all those who rest here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:53 p.m. at the Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial. In his remarks, he referred to President Nicolas Sarkozy of France; Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Prince Charles of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada; and Susan Eisenhower, granddaughter of former President Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Remarks Prior to a Cabinet Meeting
June 8, 2009

Well, thank you, Joe, and thanks to all of you Cabinet, sub-Cabinet agencies that have been involved in this process. Your leadership, Joe, has been critical on this. I'm grateful to you and your team for helping to coordinate between all the agencies, because there are a lot of moving parts to this whole process.

On Friday, we learned that we had lost an additional 345,000 jobs in the month of May. Now, that was far less than was expected, but it's still too many. That means that there are families who are still losing not only their jobs, but maybe losing their homes, finding themselves under extraordinary financial straits. And it's a reminder that we're still in the middle of a very deep recession that was years in the making, and it's going to take a considerable amount of time for us to pull out of.

Having said that, this was the fewest number of jobs that we have lost in about 8 months, so it was about half of the number lost of just a few months ago, and it's a sign that we're moving in the right direction. The key is for us to build on the modest progress that has been made in the months to come.

When we arrived here, we were confronting the most significant recession since the Great Depression. It was bad, and it was getting worse. Had we done nothing, I think it's fair to say that most economists believed we could have really gone into a tailspin. We decided to move swiftly and boldly, and I signed a Recovery Act into law just over a hundred days ago, and we've done more than ever, faster than ever, more responsibly than ever, to get the gears of the economy moving again. We've created and saved, as you said, Joe, at least 150,000 jobs, jobs of teachers and nurses and firefighters and police officers. People who had been laid off are not being laid off. Folks who might have seen that plant close, as you pointed out, in my hometown, suddenly they started seeing orders coming back in, and that meant that they were retained.

We offered immediate relief to 95 percent of working families through our tax cut. We helped struggling State governments safeguard critical safety-net programs and, in some cases, made them work better. So, Kathleen, as you know, a lot of people, they lose their jobs, they lose their health care. Because of the Recovery Act, if even when they lost their jobs, many of them were actually able to use the COBRA program that was cost-prohibitive previously. So we've got some good news to report. I've been receiving the weekly reports from all of you, and I thank you and your teams for your dedication in moving this forward.

Having said that, I'm not satisfied. We've got more work to do. The biggest concern that I have moving forward is that the toll that job losses take on individual families and communities can be self-reinforcing. People lose jobs; they pull back on spending. That means businesses don't have customers, and suddenly you start seeing more job layoffs. Our whole task here with the Recovery Act is to reverse that negative cycle into a positive cycle, and it's going to take some work.

So I'm pleased to know that having put the infrastructure in place, having gotten your teams up and running, many of the criteria by which money is going out in a responsible way that protects taxpayers having been created, now we're in a position to really accelerate.

And so the goal here is that we're going to create or save 600,000 jobs over the next 100 days. Joe highlighted some of the specific commitments that we're making to keep the recovery moving forward: keeping teachers in the classroom, cops on the streets, providing summer jobs for youth that are particularly hard-hit in this job market, breaking ground on hundreds of new projects all across the country in clean energy and transportation, and so on.

And we're going to do it—continuing to operate in a transparent fashion so that taxpayers know this money is not being wasted on a bunch of boondoggles. And I think that sometimes good news comes in what you don't hear about, and you haven't heard a bunch of scandals—knock on wood—[*laughter*]—so far.

That doesn't mean that this thing is going to be flawless, but I think it is fair to say that given the speed with which we've acted, all of you can be proud that many of the safeguards and transparency measures that have taken place so far seem to have worked. We've got to keep that up because at a time when everybody is tightening their belts, the last thing the American people want to see is that any of this money is being wasted.

Now, I know that there are some who, despite all evidence to the contrary, still don't believe in the necessity and promise of this Recovery Act, and I would suggest to them that they talk to the companies who, because of this plan, scrapped the idea of laying off employees and, in fact, decided to hire employees. Tell that to the Americans who receive that unexpected call saying come back to work. Tell it to the Americans poised to benefit from critical investments that this plan makes in our long-term growth and prosperity.

In the end, that's the only measure of progress, is whether or not the American people are seeing some progress in their own lives. And so although we've seen some stabilizing in the financial markets, and credit spreads have gone down, and we're seeing a reduction in the fear that gripped the market just a few months ago—stock market is up a little bit, all that stuff is not our ultimate goal. Our ultimate goal is making sure that the average family out there—mom working, dad working—that they

are able to pay their bills, feel some job security, make their mortgage payments; the small-business owner there is starting to see customers coming back in, they can make payroll, they can even think about hiring a little bit more and expanding. That's the measure, how ordinary families are helping to rebuild America once more.

We've got a long way to go, but I feel like we've made great progress. I'm grateful to you, Joe, for your leadership. I want to thank all of you for the good work you're doing. And now we're going to get into the nitty-gritty of how we're going to make this happen.

Press, thank you. You're getting kicked out now.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:04 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Vice President Joe Biden; and Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Biden.

Statement on the Election in Lebanon
June 8, 2009

I congratulate the people of Lebanon for holding a peaceful election yesterday. The high turnout and the candidates—too many of whom know personally the violence that has marred Lebanon—are the strongest indications yet of the Lebanese desire for security and prosperity. Once more, the people of Lebanon have demonstrated to the world their courage and the strength of their commitment to democracy.

The United States will continue to support a sovereign and independent Lebanon, committed to peace, including the full implementation of all United Nations Security Council resolutions. It is our sincere hope that the next government will continue along the path towards building a sovereign, independent, and stable Lebanon.

Government of the people and by the people sets a single standard for all who hold power: you must maintain your power through consent, not coercion; you must respect the rights of minorities and participate with a spirit of tolerance and compromise; you must place the interests of your people and the legitimate workings of the political process above your party. Commitment to these principles of peace and moderation are the best means to secure a sovereign and prosperous Lebanon.

Statement on the Death of President Omar Bongo of Gabon
June 8, 2009

I am saddened to learn of the death of President El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba of Gabon. President Bongo played a key role in developing and shaping the strong bilateral relationship that exists between Gabon and the United States today. President Bongo consistently emphasized the importance of seeking compromise and striving for peace and made protecting Gabon's natural treasures a priority. His work in conservation in his country and his commitment to conflict resolution across the continent are an important part of his legacy and will be remembered with respect.

On behalf of the United States Government, I offer my condolences to his family and to the people of Gabon.

Remarks on Fiscal Responsibility and Pay-As-You-Go Legislation
June 9, 2009

Thank you, everybody. Please have a seat. Thank you. Thank you all for joining us here in the White House. Before I begin, I want to comment briefly on the announcement by the Treasury Department with regard to the financial stability plan.

As you know, through this plan and its predecessor, taxpayer dollars were used to stabilize the financial system at a time of extraordinary stress. And these funds were also meant to be an investment, and they were meant to be temporary. And that's why this morning's announcement is important.

Several financial institutions are set to pay back $68 billion to taxpayers. And while we know that we will not escape the worst financial crisis in decades without some losses to taxpayers, it's worth noting that in the first round of repayments from these companies the Government has actually turned a profit.

Now, this is not a sign that our troubles are over—far from it. The financial crisis this administration inherited is still creating painful challenges for businesses and families alike. And I think everybody sees it in their own individual districts. But it is a positive sign. We're seeing an initial return on a few of these investments. We're restoring funds to the Treasury, where they'll be available to safeguard against continuing risks to financial stability. And as this money is returned, we'll see our national debt lessened by $68 billion, billions of dollars that this generation will not have to borrow and future generations will not have to repay.

I've said repeatedly that I have no interest in managing the banking system, or, for that matter, running auto companies or other private institutions. So today's announcement is welcome news to me. But I also want to say, the return of these funds does not provide forgiveness for past excesses or permission for future misdeeds. It's critical that as our country emerges from this period of crisis, that we learn its lessons, that those who seek reward do not take reckless risk, that short-term gains are not pursued without regard for long-term consequences.

At the same time, as we seek greater responsibility from those in the private sector, it's my view and the view of those who are standing behind me today, as well as those in the audience, that greater responsibility is required on the part of those who serve the public as well.

As a nation, we have several imperatives at this difficult moment in our history. We're confronting the worst recession this country has faced in generations, and this has required extraordinary investments in the short term. Another imperative is addressing long-deferred priorities—health care, energy, education—which threaten the American economy and the well-being of American families. And we've begun to tackle these problems as well.

But we are also called upon to rein in deficits by addressing these and other challenges in a manner that is fiscally responsible. This, in part, requires the kind of line-by-line review of the budget that is ongoing to remove things that we don't need and make the programs we do need work more efficiently. There are billions of dollars to be saved this way. But much of our effort will entail going after the big-ticket items that drive the deficits.

By ending unnecessary no-bid contracts and reforming the way Government contracts are awarded, we can save the American people up to $40 billion every year. In addition, Secretary Robert Gates has proposed a badly needed overhaul of a defense contracting system riddled with hundreds of billions of dollars in cost overruns, and the cancelation of superfluous defense systems unnecessary to combat the threats of the 21st century.

We're also going to eliminate unwarranted subsidies currently lavished on health insurance companies through Medicare, which will save roughly $177 billion over the next decade. And this is part of broader health reform, about which I'll have more to say in the coming days, which will both cut costs and improve care.

So all told, in the next 4 years, the deficit will be cut in half. Over the next decade, nondefense discretionary spending will reach its

lowest level as a share of our national income since we began keeping records in 1962.

But we must go further, and one important step we can and must take is restoring the so-called pay-as-you-go rule, or PAYGO. This is a rule I championed in the Senate and called for time and again on the campaign trail. Today, with the support of these legislators, including the Speaker of the House, my administration is submitting to Congress a proposal to codify this rule into law, and I hope that the House and Senate will act quickly to pass it.

The pay-as-you-go rule is very simple: Congress can only spend a dollar if it saves a dollar elsewhere. And this principle guides responsible families managing a budget. And it is no coincidence that this rule was in place when we moved from record deficits to record surpluses in the 1990s, and that when this rule was abandoned, we returned to record deficits that doubled the national debt. Entitlement increases and tax cuts need to be paid for. They're not free, and borrowing to finance them is not a sustainable long-term policy.

Paying for what you spend is basic common sense. Perhaps that's why here in Washington it's been so elusive. Of course, there have been those in Washington leading the charge to restore PAYGO, and many of them are here today. I want to recognize Congressman George Miller, who introduced the first PAYGO bill in the House. I want to thank the House Blue Dogs and their leader, especially Baron Hill, who has been a driving force in favor of PAYGO. I want to acknowledge Senator Claire McCaskill, who's shown real leadership on this issue in the Senate. And as I said, I want to acknowledge the Speaker of the House, as well as leader Steny Hoyer, who are here because they understand the importance of this principle and are fully supportive of our efforts.

In fact, 2 years ago, a new Democratic Congress put in place congressional rules to restore this principle, but could not pass legislation without the support of the administration. I want you all to know you now have that support.

The fact is there are few who aren't distressed by deficits. It's a concern that crosses party lines, geographic boundaries, and ideological divides. But often, in the give-and-take of the political process, the vested interests of the few overtake the broader interests of the many. The debate of the day drowns out those who speak of what we may face tomorrow. And that's why pay-as-you-go is essential. It requires Congress to navigate the ebb and flow of politics while remaining fixed on that fiscal horizon.

The reckless fiscal policies of the past have left us in a very deep hole, and digging our way out of it will take time, patience, and some tough choices. I know that in the face of this historic challenge there are many across this country who are skeptical of our collective ability to meet it. They're not wrong to feel that way. They're not wrong to draw this lesson after years in which we've put off difficult decisions, in which we've allowed our politics to grow smaller as our challenges grew ever more daunting.

But I think everybody understands this is an extraordinary moment, one in which we are called upon not just to restore fiscal responsibility, but to once again live up to the broader responsibilities we have to one another. And I know that we can summon that sense of shared obligation, that we have the capacity to change and to grow and to solve even our toughest of problems.

And that's at the heart of why we're here today. I appreciate the work of the people in this room who've shown a willingness to make hard choices and do the hard work that's essential to overcoming the challenges of the present, while leaving our Nation better off in the future. So this is going to be a lift. We know it's going to be tough. I think we can get it done, especially with the extraordinary leadership that is on display here today.

Thank you very much, everybody. Take care.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:07 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Message to the Congress on Proposed Pay-As-You-Go Legislation
June 9, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

Today I am pleased to submit to the Congress the enclosed legislative proposal, the "Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2009," or "PAYGO," together with a sectional analysis.

The deficits that my Administration inherited reflect not only a severe economic downturn but also years of failing to pay for new policies—including large tax cuts that disproportionately benefited the affluent. This failure of fiscal discipline contributed to transforming surpluses projected at the beginning of this decade into trillions of dollars in deficits. I am committed to returning our Government to a path of fiscal discipline, and PAYGO represents a key step back to the path of shared responsibility.

PAYGO would hold us to a simple but important principle: we should pay for new tax or entitlement legislation. Creating a new non-emergency tax cut or entitlement expansion would require offsetting revenue increases or spending reductions.

In the 1990s, statutory PAYGO encouraged the tough choices that helped to move the Government from large deficits to surpluses, and I believe it can do the same today. Both houses of Congress have already taken an important step toward righting our fiscal course by adopting congressional rules incorporating the PAYGO principle. But we can strengthen enforcement and redouble our commitment by enacting PAYGO into law.

Both the Budget I have proposed and the Budget Resolution approved by the Congress would cut the deficit in half by the end of my first term, while laying a new foundation for sustained and widely shared economic growth through key investments in health, education, and clean energy. Enacting statutory PAYGO would complement these efforts and represent an important step toward strengthening our budget process, cutting deficits, and reducing national debt. Ultimately, however, we will have to do even more to restore fiscal sustainability.

I urge the prompt and favorable consideration of this proposal.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 9, 2009.

Statement on the Day of Portugal, Camoes, and the Portuguese Communities
June 10, 2009

The United States and Portugal have a strong and long-standing friendship. Today, on the "Day of Portugal, Camoes, and the Portuguese Communities," people of Portuguese descent around the world mark the date of the passing of Portugal's greatest poet, Luis Vaz de Camoes. It is fitting that Camoes, who lived from 1524 to 1580, is best known for his epic poem, *Os Lusiadas*, a tribute to the golden age of Portuguese exploration and discovery.

This Nation has greatly benefited from the contributions of countless Portuguese Americans. On this Day of Portugal, I proudly send my best wishes to all who celebrate Portuguese culture and heritage on this occasion.

Statement on the Shooting at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
June 10, 2009

I am shocked and saddened by today's shooting at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. This outrageous act reminds us that we must remain vigilant against anti-Semitism and prejudice in all its forms. No American institution is more important to this effort than

the Holocaust Museum and no act of violence will diminish our determination to honor those who were lost by building a more peaceful and tolerant world.

Today we have lost a courageous security guard who stood watch at this place of solemn remembrance. My thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends in this painful time.

NOTE: The statement referred to security officer Stephen T. Johns.

Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session in Green Bay, Wisconsin
June 11, 2009

The President. Thank you, Green Bay. It's good to see you. Thank you. Please, everybody, have a seat. Thank you. It is great to be back in Green Bay. We are hoping that both the Packers and the Bears do better this year. Come on, we can bring everybody together. [*Laughter*]

I want to make just a few acknowledgments; we've got some wonderful special guests here today. First of all, can everybody please give Laura a huge round of applause for sharing her story? I want to thank our hosts, Principal Bryan Davis and his beautiful family and Superintendent Greg Maass; please gives them a big round of applause. Your outstanding Governor, Jim Doyle, is here; give him a big round of applause. Lieutenant Governor Barbara Lawton is here; give Barbara a big round of applause. Congressman Steve Kagen is here, Congressman. Your own mayor, Jim Schmitt, and Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett is here as well.

I want to thank all the tribal leaders of Wisconsin who are with us here today. And they couldn't be with us, but I want to acknowledge great leadership that you're getting in the United States Senate from Herb Kohl and Russ Feingold; give them a big round of applause.

This is a town hall meeting, but if you don't mind, I want to make a few comments at the outset, sort of to frame the discussion, and then we'll get to the fun part, and you guys can bombard me with questions.

As I said, I want to thank Southwest High School for hosting us. I especially want to thank Laura for sharing her story. It takes courage to do that, and it takes even more courage to battle a disease like cancer with such grace and determination. And I know her family is here, and they're working and fighting with her every inch of the way.

Now, Laura's story is incredibly moving, but sadly, it's not unique. Every day in this country, more and more Americans are forced to worry about not just getting well, but whether they can afford to get well. Millions more wonder if they can afford the routine care necessary to stay well. Even for those who have health insurance, rising premiums are straining family budgets to the breaking point, premiums that have doubled over the last 9 years and have grown at a rate three times faster than wages. Let me repeat that. Health care premiums have gone up three times faster than wages have gone up. So desperately needed procedures and treatments are put off because the price is too high, and all it takes is a single illness to wipe out a lifetime of savings.

Now, employers aren't faring any better. The costs of health care has helped leave big corporations like GM and Chrysler at a competitive disadvantage with their foreign counterparts. For small businesses, it's even worse. One month, they're forced to cut back on health care benefits. The next month, they've got to drop coverage. The month after that, they have no choice but to start laying off workers.

For the Government, the growing cost of Medicare and Medicaid is the biggest threat to our Federal deficit, bigger than Social Security, bigger than all the investments that we've made so far. So if you're worried about spending, and you're worried about deficits, you

need to be worried about the costs of health care.

We have the most expensive health care system in the world, bar none. We spend almost 50 percent more per person on health care than the next most expensive nation—50 percent more. But here's the thing, Green Bay: We're not any healthier for it; we don't necessarily have better outcomes. Even within our own country, there are a lot of the places where we spend less on health care, but actually have higher quality than places where we spend more. And it turns out Green Bay is a good example. Right here in Green Bay, you get more quality out of fewer health care dollars than many other communities across this country. This is something to be proud of. That's something to be proud of. I want to repeat that. You spend less; you have higher quality here in Green Bay than in many parts of the country. But across the country, spending on health care keeps on going up and up and up, day after day, year after year.

Now, I know that there are millions of Americans who are happy, who are content with their health care coverage. They like their plan; they value their relationship with their doctor. And no matter how we reform health care, I intend to keep this promise: If you like your doctor, you'll be able to keep your doctor; if you like your health care plan, you'll be able to keep your health care plan.

So don't let people scare you. If you like what you've got, we're not going to make you change. But in order to preserve what's best about our health care system, we have to fix what doesn't work. For we've reached the point where doing nothing about the cost of health care is no longer an option. The status quo is unsustainable. If we don't act, and act soon, to bring down costs, it will jeopardize everybody's health care. If we don't act, every American will feel the consequences in higher premiums—which, by the way, means lower take-home pay, because it's not as if those costs are all borne by your employer; they—that's money that could have gone to giving you a raise—in lost jobs and shuttered businesses, in a rising number of uninsured, and a rising debt that our children and their children will be paying off for decades.

If we do nothing, within a decade we will be spending 1 out of every $5 we earn on health care. And in 30 years, we'll be spending 1 out of every $3 we earn on health care. And that's untenable. It's unacceptable. I will not allow it as President of the United States. Now, health care reform is not something I just cooked up when I took office. Sometimes I hear people say, "He's taking on too much. Why is he"—I'm not doing this because I don't have enough to do. [*Laughter*] We need health care reform because it's central to our economic future. It's central to our long-term prosperity as a nation. In past years and decades, there may have been some disagreement on this point, but not anymore. Today, we've already built an unprecedented coalition of people who are ready to reform our health care system: physicians and health insurers, businesses and workers, Democrats and Republicans.

A few weeks ago, some of these groups committed to doing something that would've been unthinkable just a few years ago: They promised to work together to cut national health care spending by $2 trillion over the next decade. And that will bring down costs; it will bring down premiums. That's exactly the kind of cooperation we need.

But the question now is, how do we finish the job? How do we permanently bring down costs and make quality, affordable health care available to every single American? And my view is that reform should be guided by a simple principle: We will fix what's broken, and we build on what works.

In some cases there's broad agreement on the steps we should take. So in our Recovery Act that we already passed——

[*At this point, 2-year-old Grant Perry waved his cap at the President.*]

The President. Hey, buddy—my guy in the cap, he was waving at me. [*Laughter*]

In the Recovery Act, we've already made investments in health IT—that's information technologies—and electronic medical records that will reduce medical errors, save lives, save money, and still ensure privacy. We also need to invest in prevention and wellness programs to help Americans live longer and healthier lives.

But the real cost savings will come from changing the incentives of a system that automatically equates expensive care with better care. We've got to move from addressing—we've got to address flaws that increase profits but don't actually increase the quality of care for patients.

We have to ask why places like Geisinger Health systems in rural Pennsylvania or Intermountain Health in Salt Lake City or communities like Green Bay can offer high-quality care at costs well below average, but other places in America can't. We need to identify the best practices across the country, learn from the successes, and then duplicate those successes everywhere else.

And we should change the warped incentives that reward doctors and hospitals based on how many tests and procedures they do, even if those tests and procedures aren't necessary or result from medical mistakes. Doctors didn't get into the medical profession to be counters—bean-counters or paper-pushers. They're not interested in spending all their time acting like lawyers or business executives. They became doctors to heal people, and that's what we have to free them to be able to do.

We also have to provide Americans who can't afford health insurance more affordable options. That's a economic imperative, but it's also a moral imperative, because we know that when somebody doesn't have health insurance, they're forced to get treatment at the ER and all of us end up paying for it. The average family pays a thousand dollars in extra premiums to pay for people going to the emergency room who don't have health insurance. So you're already subsidizing other folks; it's just you're subsidizing the most expensive care. You'd be better off subsidizing to make sure they were getting regular checkups. We're already paying for it; it's just it's hidden in your premiums.

So what we're working on is the creation of something called the Health Insurance Exchange, which would allow you to one-stop shop for a health care plan, compare benefits and prices, choose the plan that's best for you. If you're happy with your plan, you keep it. None of these plans, though, would be able to deny coverage on the basis of preexisting conditions.

Every plan should include an affordable, basic benefits package. And if you can't afford one of these plans, we should provide you some assistance to make sure that you can. So I also strongly believe that one of the options in the exchange should be a public insurance option. And the reason is not because we want a Government takeover of health care—I've already said, if you've got a private plan that works for you, that's great—but we want some competition. If the private insurance companies have to compete with a public option, it'll keep them honest, and it'll keep—help keep their prices down.

Now, covering more Americans is obviously going to require some money up front. We'll save money when they stop going to the emergency room and getting regular checkups, but it's going to cost some money up front. Helping families lower their costs, there's going to be a cost to this, and it comes at a time when we don't have a lot of extra money to spend, let's be honest. When I came in, we had a $1.3 trillion deficit. And with the economic recession that we're going through, tax revenues are down—I was talking to Governor Doyle—tax revenues are down; more people are seeking help from the State. So we've got a lot of pressure on our budget.

So that's why I've already promised that reform cannot add to our deficit over the next 10 years. And to make that happen, we've already identified hundreds of billions of dollars worth of savings in our budget, savings that will come from steps like reducing Medicare overpayments to insurance companies and rooting out waste and fraud and abuse in both Medicare and Medicaid. And I'll be outlining hundreds of billions of dollars more in savings in the days to come. And I'll be honest, even with these savings, reform will require some additional upfront resources. And that's why I've proposed that we scale back how much the highest income Americans can deduct on their tax—taxes back—take it back to the rate that existed under the Reagan years, and we could

use some of that money to help finance health care reform.

Now, in all these reforms, our goal is simple: the highest quality health care at the lowest possible cost. Let me repeat what I said before. We want to fix what's broken, build on what works. As Congress moves forward on health care legislation in the coming weeks, there are going to be different ideas and disagreements about how to achieve this goal. And I welcome all ideas; we've got to have a good debate. What I will not welcome, what I will not accept, is endless delay or denial that reform needs to happen.

Because when it comes to health care, this country can't continue on its current path. I know that there are some who will say that it's too expensive. I know some people say it's too complicated. But I can assure you the cost of doing nothing is going to be a lot higher in the years to come. Our deficits will be higher. Our premiums will keep going up. Our wages will be lower. Our jobs will be fewer. Our businesses will suffer.

So to those who criticize our efforts, I ask them, "What's the alternative? What else do we say to all the families who spend more on health care than on housing or on food? What do we tell those businesses that are choosing between closing their doors and letting their workers go? What do we say to Americans like Laura, a woman who has worked all her life, whose husband has worked, whose family has done everything right, a brave and proud woman whose child's school recently took up a penny drive to help pay her medical bills? What do we tell them?"

Here's what I'm going to tell them. That after decades of inaction, we have finally decided to fix what's broken about health care in America. We have finally decided it's time to give every American quality health care at an affordable cost. We have decided to invest in reforms that will bring costs down now. We've decided to bring costs down now and in the future. And we've decided to change the system so that our doctors and health care providers are free to do what they trained and studied and worked so hard to do: to make people well again. That's what we can do in this country right now, at this moment. So I don't want to accept "no" for an answer. We need to get this done, but I'm going to need your help. That's why I want your thoughts, your questions on this and any other issues.

Thank you very much, Green Bay. God bless you. Thank you. All right. Thank you.

All right. Okay. Here's what we're going to do. I've got about 15, 20 minutes. Everybody sit down. [*Laughter*] And here's how we're going to work it. There are no prearranged questions here. You just raise your hand. I haven't preselected anybody. I'm going to go girl-boy-girl-boy—[*laughter*]—so that I'm not accused of bias in any way, all right. And I won't be able to get to every single question, but I'll try to get to as many as possible.

So there are microphones in the audience. If you can wait until the microphone comes to you, and that way everybody will be able to hear your question. Stand up and introduce yourself as well; that will be helpful.

This young lady right here, right here, since you're near a microphone. There you go.

Overhaul of Health Care System

Q. Good afternoon, Mr. President. I am Paulette Garren. As a self-employed individual, I spend approximately $8,000 annually on my health insurance premium, and it's a $2,000 deductible, no dental, no vision, no prescription coverage. As my business is declining and because of the economy we have, I am now in a situation where I'm taking savings to help pay for food and housing, because I also still don't want to lose my health insurance. And I will be frank and honest with you, I am a supporter of a single-payer system over any other system, because I do—[*applause*]—thank you—I do believe that it will meet your three criteria and be the most economically feasible plan that we have.

When you were speaking, you mentioned that if we go with a public and a private option, that the public option will keep the private insurers honest. My concern is that we will end up in a situation like we have with Medicare, where Medicare is basically a subsidy of private insurance companies, because folks are able to buy Medicare Advantage. It seems to me that

we would take that same scenario and increase it outward for the entire country. And that is why I still support single-payer, and I know that at one point you did, and I would ask that it still be on the table for consideration. And thank you so much for your time.

The President. All right. Thank you for the great question.

Let me just talk about some of the different options that are out there, because sometimes there's been confusion in the press and the public, and people use, you know, politics in talking about the issue. There are some folks who say, "socialized medicine." You hear that all the time, "socialized medicine." Well, socialized medicine would mean that the Government would basically run all of health care. They would hire the doctors; they would run the hospitals. They'd just run the whole thing. Great Britain has a system of socialized medicine. Nobody is talking about doing that, all right? So when you hear people saying "socialized medicine," understand I don't know anybody in Washington who is proposing that, certainly not me.

Socialized medicine is different from a single-payer plan. Now, the way a single-payer plan works is that you still have private doctors, private hospitals, providers, et cetera, but everything is reimbursed through a single payer, usually the Government. So Medicare would be an example of a single-payer plan. Doctors don't work for Medicare, but Medicare reimburses for services that are provided to seniors who are on Medicare. There have been proposals to have, essentially, Medicare for all, a single-payer plan for all Americans, and—[*applause*]—that person likes it. [*Laughter*] So there have—and there are some appealing things to a single-payer plan, and there are some countries where that's worked very well.

Here is the thing. We're not starting from scratch. We've already got—because of all kinds of historical reasons, we have primarily a employer-based system that uses private insurers alongside a Medicare plan for people above a certain age, and then you've got Medicaid for folks who are very poor and don't have access to health care. So we've got sort of a patchwork system. And it was my belief and continues to be my belief that whatever we might do if we were just starting from scratch, that it was important, in order to get it done politically but also to minimize disruptions to families, that we start with what we have, as opposed to try to completely scrap the system and start all over again.

And so what my attitude was, if you've got an employer-based system—and a lot of people still get their health insurance through their jobs—obviously, you're self-employed, so this is a different category, but the majority of people still get their health insurance through their employer. Rather than completely disrupt things for them, my attitude is, let them keep the health insurance that they've got, the doctors that they have. There's still a role for private insurance, but number one, let's have insurance reform so that you can't eliminate people for preexisting conditions, so that there's none of the cherry-picking that's going on to try to just get the healthiest people insured and get rid of the sick people. Right? So you've got to set up some rules for how insurance companies operate.

Number two, that for people who are self-employed, for small businesses, for others, they should have an option that they can go to if they can't get insurance through the private marketplace. That's why I've said that I think a public option would make sense. What that then does is it gives people a choice. If they're happy with what they've got, if they're employed by somebody who provides them with good health care, you can keep it; you don't have to do anything. But if you don't have health insurance, then you have an option available to you.

Now, how this debate is evolving in Washington, unfortunately, sometimes kind of falls into the usual politics, right? So what you've heard is some folks on the other side saying, "I'm opposed to a public option because that's going to lead to Government running your health care system." Now, I don't know how clearly I can say this, but let me try to repeat it. If you've got health insurance that you're happy with through the private sector, then we're not going to force you to do anything. All we're

saying is, for the 46 million people who don't have health insurance or for people who've got health insurance, like you, who are self-employed but the premiums and the deductibles are so high that you almost never get prevention services—you put off going to a doctor until you're really sick because of the out-of-pocket expenses—let's change some of those incentives so that we get more people getting prevention, more people getting health care to keep them healthy, as opposed to just treating them when they get sick.

And I think that we can come up with a sensible, commonsense way that's not disruptive, that still has room for insurance companies and the private sector, but that does not put people in the position where they are potentially bankrupt every time they get sick. Now, how this debate is going to evolve over the next 8 weeks—I'm very open-minded. And if people can show me, here's a good idea and here's how we can get it done, and it's not something I've thought of, I'm happy to steal people's ideas. [*Laughter*] I'm not ideologically driven one way or another about it.

So the one thing that I do think is critically important, though, is for self-employed people—because there are a lot of self-employed people here and a lot of small-businesspeople—they don't have the ability to pool their health insurance risk. And what that means is—part of the reason that, typically, if you work for a big company, you get a better deal on health insurance than if you're just working for a small company is because there's a bigger pool. And that means that each of us have a certain risk of getting sick, but if that's spread around, everybody's premiums can be lowered because the total risk for everybody is somewhat lower.

If you're self-employed, you don't have access to that same pool. And part of what we have to do—and that's where a public plan potentially comes in, or at least some mechanism to allow you to join a big pool. That will help drive down your costs immediately: your out-of-pocket costs for premiums, lower your deductibles. And what I'd like to see, as I said, is that every plan includes not only prohibitions against discriminating against people with preexisting conditions, but also every plan should have incentives for people to use preventive services and wellness programs so that they can stay healthier.

You are somebody who I think can be directly impacted and directly helped if Congress gets this thing done and gets it on my desk, I hope, by sometime in October of this year. All right?

Okay, it's a guy's turn. It's a guy's turn. All right, this gentleman in the suit.

Health Care Quality

Q. Welcome to Green Bay, Mr. President. It's an honor to have you here.

The President. Thank you, sir.

Q. My name is John Corpus. I am fortunate enough to be here with my 10-year-old daughter, who is missing her last day of school for this. I hope she doesn't get in trouble.

The President. Oh, no. [*Laughter*] Do you need me to write a note?

Q. I'll take you up on that, actually, Mr. President.

The President. All right, go ahead. I'll start writing it now. What's your name?

Q. John Corpus.

The President. No, her. [*Laughter*]

Q. Well, considering I have some people here from work that are very interested in——

The President. No, no, I'm serious though. What's your daughter's name?

Q. Her name is Kennedy.

The President. Kennedy. All right, that's a cool name. [*Laughter*]

Q. That's a very cool name, thank you.

The President. All right, I'm going to write to Kennedy's teacher. [*Laughter*] Okay, go ahead; I'm listening to your question.

Q. Thank you, sir. I work in the health system, and we work with employers; we work with payers, brokers, everybody to try to lower costs for employers. We have retail health clinics, walk-in clinics, regular primary clinics, and an emergency department. And everybody is trying to do something now, but all I'm hearing is about what's going to happen long term.

And my question is, what is a timeline that we have set up for this? What do you see happening, especially in the area of working with employers to either offer more insurance, or for

the uninsured, being able to get them something now?

The President. Well, look, we're not going to be able—whatever reforms we set up, it will probably take a couple of years to get it in place.

[*The President wrote a note and handed it to Kennedy Corpus.*]

The President. Here you go, Kennedy. There you go. You've got it. [*Laughter*]

All right. So whatever reforms we pass, we're not—it's going to take a couple of years to get all the reforms and all the systems in place. There are some things that I think we should be able to do fairly quickly, for example, the preexisting condition issue. Some of the insurance reform issues I think we should be able to get in place more rapidly.

The thing that I think we're going to have to spend the most time thinking about and really get right—and you probably know more about this than I do, because you're working with a lot of these employers and insurers and so forth—is how do we change the medical delivery systems that can either drive costs way up and decrease quality or drive costs down and improve quality?

Let me describe to you what's happening, part of the reason that Green Bay is doing a better job than some other countries—some other parts of the country. There are places where doctors typically work together as teams. And they start off asking themselves, "How can we provide the best possible care for this patient?" And because they're coordinating, they don't order a bunch of duplicative tests. And the primary care physician who initially sees the patient is in contact with all the specialists so that in one meeting they can consult with each other and make a series of decisions. And then they don't overprescribe, and they make decisions about how quickly you can get somebody out of a hospital, because oftentimes being in a hospital actually increases the incidence of infection, for example. So there are a whole series of decisions that can be made that improve quality, increase coordination, but actually lower costs.

Now, the problem is more and more what our health care system is doing is it's incentivizing each doctor individually to say, "How many tests can I perform? Because the more tests I perform, the more I get paid." And it may not even be a conscious decision on the part of the doctor; it's just that the medical system starts getting in bad habits. And it's driven from a business mentality instead of a mentality of how do we make patients better?

And so what you've got is a situation where, for example, the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, is famous for some of the best quality and some of the lowest cost. People are healthier coming out of there; they do great. And then you've got places—there's a town in McAllen, Texas, where costs are actually a third higher than they are at Mayo, but the outcomes are worse.

So the key for us is to figure out, how do we take all the good ideas in the Mayo Clinic and spread them all across the country so that that becomes the dominant culture for providing health care? That's going to take some time. It involves changing how we reimburse doctors. It involves doctors forming teams and working in a more cooperative way. And that's kind of a slow, laborious process.

So here's the bottom line: If we pass health care reform this year, my expectation would be that immediately, families are going to see some relief on some issues, but we will not have the whole system perfectly set up probably until, say, 4 or 5 years from now. And I think that's a realistic time frame.

But if we wait, if we said, well, you know, since we're not going to get it right right away, let's put this off until 2 or 4 or 5 years from now, it's never going to happen. That's what's been going on for the last 50 years now; people have said we can't do it right now, and as a consequence, it never gets done. Now is the time to do it, all right?

Okay, it's a girl's turn. This young lady right there.

Preventative Care/Bipartisanship on Health Care Reform

Q. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. President. You've talked a little bit about the

Government plan and the competition with other insurance companies, and we all know that in the insurance business, everything is about managing risk. And I guess I'd like to know what your vision is for how we would better manage the risk, especially if there is going to be a Government program. What's your philosophy about primary care and the role of primary care? Do you subscribe to the medical home theory? How do you engage patients in this model so that that risk can be better managed, and we can, ultimately, result in a population that has better health at a lower cost?

The President. You sound very knowledgeable. Are you in the health care system?

Q. Yes, I am. My name is Chris Woleske, and I'm with Bellin Health.

The President. Well, look, in some ways you answered your own question, because I think that the more we are incentivizing high-quality primary care, prevention, wellness, management of chronic illnesses, the I mean, one of the things that it turns out is that about 20 percent of the patients account for 80 percent of the care and the costs of the health care system. And if we can get somebody, first of all, who is overweight to lose weight so that they don't become diabetic, we save tons of money. Even after they've become diabetic, if we are working with them to manage their regimen of treatments in a steady way, then it might cost us $150, when you prorate the costs, for a counselor to call the diabetic on a regular basis to make sure they're taking their meds, and as a consequence, we don't pay $30,000 for a foot amputation. All right? So there are all sorts of ways that I think that we want to improve care, and that helps us manage risk.

Now, people are still going to get sick, and there are still going to be really catastrophic costs. And there have been a lot of ideas floated around in Congress: Are there ways that we can help to underwrite some of the catastrophic care that takes place, so that would help lower premiums? I'm open to a whole range of these ideas, and one of the things—one of the approaches that I've tried to take is to not just put down my plan and say, "It's my way or the highway." First of all, one of the things it turns out is Congress doesn't really like you to just tell them exactly what to do. [*Laughter*] Steve Kagen can testify to that. [*Laughter*] So it's always better to be in a collaborative mode and to listen.

But part of the reason is, it's not just the politics of it, it's also because these are genuinely complicated issues, and nobody has all the right answers. So what we have to do is to find the 80 percent of stuff that everybody agrees on, things like electronic medical records that can eliminate errors in hospitals. Because right now nurses can't read the doctors' handwriting, but if it comes out on a PDA that they're reading, then they're more likely to be accurate. And reducing paperwork—everybody agrees, there's no reason why you should have to fill out five, six, eight forms every time you go to see a doctor. Everybody knows that. Huge amounts of wasted money. Electronic billing and billing that you can understand, everybody knows that's something that needs to be done.

So there are things that can be done that Republican, Democrat, liberal, conservative, we all know need to happen. The challenge is going to revolve around, how do we deal with the 20 percent of the stuff where people disagree?

This whole issue of the public plan is a good example, by the way. I mean, right now a number of my Republican friends have said, "We can't support anything with a public option." It's not clear that it's based on any evidence as much as it is their thinking, their fear, that somehow, once you have a public plan that Government will take over the entire health care system. I mean, I'm trying to be fair in presenting what their basic concern is. And that's going to be a significant debate. And what we're trying to explain is, is that all we're trying to make sure of is, is that there is an option out there for people where the public—where the free market fails. And we've got to admit that the free market has not worked perfectly when it comes to health care, because you've got a lot of people who are really getting hurt: 46 million uninsured, a whole more—bunch of more people who are underinsured who are seeing their premiums and deductibles rise. So I think a lot of the questions you're asking, those details are exactly what we're trying to work out.

This next 8 weeks is going to be critical, though. And you need to be really paying attention and putting pressure on your Members of Congress to say, there's no excuses. If we don't get it done this year, we're probably not going to get it done. And understand, even if you're happy with your health care right now, if you look at the trends, remember what I said. Your premiums are going up three times faster than your wages and your incomes. So just kind of extrapolate, think about what does that mean for you 5 years from now or 10 years from now? If nothing changes, then you, essentially, are going to be going more—deeper and deeper into your pocket to keep the health care that you've got. And at some point, your employers may decide, we just can't afford it. And there are a lot of people where that's happened, where their employers suddenly say, either you can't afford it or you've got to pay a much bigger share of your health care.

So don't think that somehow just by standing still, just because you're doing okay now, that you're going to be doing good 5 years from now. We've got to catch the problem now before it overwhelms our entire economy.

All right, it's a guy's turn. It's a guy's turn. This gentleman right here, right there in the blue shirt. There you go.

Education Reform

Q. I don't know if I need a microphone or not——

The President. Oh, you got a good voice, but we still want to give you a microphone. Hold on a second. Where's my mike people? Here we go.

Q. My name is Matt Stein. I'm a teacher. I've been in education for almost 20 years.

The President. Thank you, Matt. What do you teach? What do you teach?

Q. I teach at North Central Area schools in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

The President. Outstanding.

Q. UP, baby! [*Laughter*]

Q. UP power, Yoopers. [*Laughter*]

The President. Is that what you call yourselves, Yoopers?

Q. Yes. [*Laughter*]

The President. Okay, that's cool. All right.

Q. Proudly we call ourselves Yoopers. [*Laughter*]

One of the things that I've learned in education in the last 20 years is that the system is not broken. And it bothers me when I hear politicians, and even my President, say that our educational system is broken. Not to insult you, but——

The President. I don't feel insulted.

Q. Good. This system works in cases. There are great things happening in Green Bay and Appleton and all over the UP. And there are things that can be reproduced. My question is, when will the focus be on reproducing those things—smaller classrooms, creating communities in your classrooms—and moving the focus away from single-day testing and test-driven outcomes?

The President. Well, all right—well, let me, first of all, thank you for teaching. My sister is a teacher, and I think there is no more noble a profession than helping to train the next generation of Americans.

I completely agree with you that there is a lot of good stuff going on in American education. The problem is, is that it's uneven. And, well, let me put it this way. There are actually two problems. In some places, it is completely broken. In some urban communities, where you've got 50 percent of the kids dropping out, you only have 1 out of every 10 children who are graduating at grade level, this system is broken for them.

Q. You have crime—[*inaudible*].

The President. Well, I'm going to get to that. I mean, we can't have too big of a debate here. You got your question. [*Laughter*] Don't worry, though, I'm going to answer your question.

So there are some places where it really is completely broken. And there, yes, a lot of it has to do with poverty and families that are in bad shape. And there are all kinds of reasons. And yet, even there, there are schools that work. So the question is, why is it that some schools are working and some schools aren't, even in the worst circumstances, and why don't we duplicate what works in those schools so that all kids have a chance?

Now, in other places, Green Bay and Appleton and many communities throughout Wisconsin and Michigan, the average public school is actually doing a reasonably good job. But can I still say that even if you factor out the urban schools, we are falling behind when it comes to math; our kids are falling behind when it comes to science. There—we have kind of settled into mediocrity when we compare ourselves to other advanced countries and wealthy countries. That's a problem because the reason that America over the last hundred years has consistently been the wealthiest nation is because we've also been the most educated nation.

It used to be by a pretty sizable factor: We had the highest high school graduation rates; we had the highest college graduation rates; we had the highest number of Ph.D.s, the highest number of engineers and scientists. We used to be head and shoulders above other countries when it came to education. We aren't anymore. We're sort of in the middle of the pack now among wealthy, advanced, industrialized countries.

So even with the good schools, we've got to pick up the pace, because the world has gotten competitive. The Chinese, the Indians, they're coming at us, and they're coming at us hard. And they're hungry, and they're really buckling down. And they watch our kids—their kids watch a lot less TV than our kids do, play a lot fewer video games; they're in the classroom a lot longer.

So here's the bottom line: We've got to improve; we've got to step up our game, which brings me to the next point in your question, which is, how do we do that? I agree with you that if all we're doing is spreading around a lot of standardized tests and teaching to the test, that's not improving our education system. All right?

And so there's a saying in Illinois I learned when I was down in a lot of rural communities. They said, "Just weighing a pig doesn't fatten it." [*Laughter*] You can weigh it all the time, but it's not making the hog fatter. So the point being, if we're—all we're doing is testing and then teaching to the test, that doesn't assure that we're actually improving educational outcomes.

We do need to have accountability, however. We do need to measure progress with our kids. Maybe it's just one standardized test, plus portfolios of work that kids are doing, plus observing the classroom. There can be a whole range of assessments, but we do have to have some kind of accountability, number one.

Number two, we do have to upgrade the professional development for our teachers. I mean, we still have a lot of teachers who are—we've got a lot of teachers who are well-meaning, but they're teaching science, and they didn't major in science, and they don't necessarily know science that well. And they certainly don't know how to make science interesting. So we've got to give them the chance to train and become better teachers. We've got to recruit more teachers, train them better, retain them better, match them up with master teachers who are doing excellent work so that they are upgrading their skills.

If after all that training, the teacher is still not very good, we've got to ask that teacher, probably, there are a lot of other professions out there; you should try one. I mean, I'm just being blunt, but we're going to have to pick up the pace.

Now, the key point I want to make is this: We should focus on what works, based on good data. And Arne Duncan, my Secretary of Education, this guy is just obsessed with improving our education system. He is focused a hundred percent on it, and he is completely committed to teachers. He—we think that teachers are the most important ingredient in good schools. We're going to do whatever works to help teachers do a better job. We're going to eliminate those things that don't help teachers do a good job. Some of it is going to require more money, so in our Recovery Act, we had more money for improving curriculums, teacher training, recruitment, a lot of these things. But you can't just put more money without reform, and so some of it is demanding more accountability and more reform.

There's one other ingredient, though, and that is parents. We've got to have parents putting more emphasis on education with our kids. That's how we're all going to be able to pick up our game.

So, all right, I've got time for one more question, and I'm going to go with this young lady

right here who's got a picture of me, I guess. [*Laughter*]

Q. We're very strong supporters of you. We followed you at the campaign rally back in September. I took my 5-month-old son. His name is Daniel Clay Stevens, and he's enrolled in the Oneida Nation of Indians of Wisconsin.

The President. There you go.

Q. And we were fortunate enough that you got to hold him. You actually called him "adorable"; I don't know if you remember.

The President. I'm sure he was. [*Laughter*] I do.

Q. I was just wondering if you'd be able to sign this for me. Okay. Thanks.

The President. Well, I can sign that, yes. I'll ask—I'll get one more question. I'll be happy to sign it. So it's a young lady, sir. Everybody is pointing at this young lady, so she must be really important—[*laughter*]—or very popular.

Personal Responsibility for Health Care/ Health of the Youth

Q. Well, my name is Jean Marsh. I am the president of the Green Bay School Board, and I'm also a registered nurse, and I work at Saint Vincent Hospital. My question centers on wellness and personal responsibility for one's health care. Could you talk about how your reforms would incorporate wellness and encouraging people to take more responsibility for their own health care?

The President. Yes. Well, I think it's a great question. For those of you who are—still have employer-based care, one of the things that we've been doing is meeting with companies who are really doing some innovative things to encourage their employees to get well. So—and some of it involved financial incentives. So these employers, they'll say, you know what, we provide for your health insurance, but if you quit smoking, you will see money in your pockets in the form of lower premiums; if you lose weight, you will see an incentive, money in your pocket. Then they set up gyms or arrange for club memberships for their employees. Then what they do is they set up a computerized system so you can check your progress on an ongoing basis, just by logging on through the company.

So there are a whole range of steps that a lot of employers are taking to help encourage that, and what we want to do is to work with those employers to give every company an incentive to do the right thing with their employees.

Now, for those who don't have an employer-based system, or they're going through Medicare or Medicaid or what have you, any time that we can reimburse for preventive care—getting a regular mammogram or a pap smear or just having a regular checkup for colon cancer—to the extent that we are encouraging reimbursements on those items, then hopefully, people will utilize them more.

But I think that this is extraordinarily important. We can all take steps to become healthier. And there's nothing wrong with us giving a little bit of a nudge in moving people in the direction of healthier lifestyles.

But look, the—it's hard, and changing habits are hard, and it starts with our children, which is why, as a part of our overall health care reform, we've also got to talk about, for example, our school lunch programs. If—and, you know, you're at the head of a school board, as well as a nurse; I know you're struggling with this. The cheapest way to feed all the kids is to have the frozen tater tots, and you get them out, and you heat them up, and then you've got pizza and fries. And then the soda companies, they all say, "We'll put in a free soda machine in there so the kids can have as much soda as they want." And pretty soon our kids are seeing their rates of type 2 diabetes skyrocket. They're not getting the exercise, because a lot of schools are running out of money when it comes to PE. Kids are sitting in front of the TV all day long.

Michelle and I always used to talk—when we were kids, folks our age and over will remember this—[*laughter*]—basically, your folks, like, especially during the summer, you would leave at 8, and then maybe you came home for some lunch, and then you'd be gone until dark, and you'd come back in. And that whole time you were out there running around. Well, kids aren't doing that. Now, some of it is safety issues, and that's why public safety is important; having playgrounds is

important; having adults who are willing to volunteer for Little League and basketball leagues, and all—that's all important. But we've got to get our children into healthier habits. That in turn will lead to healthier adults.

And so Government can't do all of this. I'm the first one to acknowledge this. That's why I'm always puzzled when people—they go out there creating this bogeyman about how, you know, "Obama wants Government-run"—I don't want Government to run stuff. Like I said, I've got enough stuff to do. [*Laughter*] I've got North Korea, and I've got Iran. And I've got Afghanistan and Iraq. And I don't know where people get this idea that I want to run stuff or I want Government to run stuff. I would—I think it'd be great if the health care system was working perfectly, and we didn't have to be involved at all. That would be wonderful. That's not how it's worked. We've got a 50-year experiment in that. It's not worked well.

So I actually think that if everybody has a pragmatic attitude about this problem, they say, we're all going to have to do our part; families are going to have to do their part by being healthier; employers do their parts by encouraging their employers to be healthier; Government doing its part by making sure that those people who are working very hard but still don't have health insurance or their premiums are getting too sky-high, that they're getting some—a hand up; insurance companies, drug companies doing their parts by not price gouging or trying to cut people out of the system; if—hospitals adopting best practices—if we're doing all those pieces, then we can start bending this cost curve down.

And that's one last point I want to make, because what you'll hear during this debate over the next several weeks is people will also say the deficit and the debt are skyrocketing, and that's the reason why we can't afford to do health reform. So I just want to repeat: The single biggest problem we have in terms of the debt and the deficit is health care; it's Medicare and Medicaid. That is—when you hear all these projections about all these trillions of dollars and red ink going out as far as the eye can see, almost all of that is because of the increase in Medicare and Medicaid costs that are going up much, much faster than inflation.

It's undoubtedly true that this economic crisis has hurt our budget situation, because again, a lot less money is coming in from corporate taxes, sales taxes, et cetera. So that reduces the amount of money coming in at the same time as we're having to put a lot more money out for food stamps and for unemployment insurance and all kinds of other help that people need when they get thrown out of their jobs; subsidizing COBRA so they can keep their health care. That's contributed to some of it.

Some of it is that I have proposed some investments in education and in energy and in health information technologies. But there was just an article in the New York Times yesterday that showed that all that stuff, everything that I've proposed—my stimulus package, what we've done in terms of bailing out the financial system, all that stuff—that accounts for maybe 7, 8 percent of what you've seen in terms of increased debt and deficits. The real problem is Medicaid and Medicare. That's the nightmare scenario. If we can bend the curve, the cost curve down so that health care inflation is no more than ordinary inflation, it's matching up with the amount of increases that you're seeing on your paychecks, in your wages and your incomes, then we're going to be okay. And if I—we don't get a handle on it, we're not going to be okay. It doesn't matter, you know, that we eliminate earmarks or do all that other stuff. That won't make any difference; we'll still be consumed by huge debt for the next generation.

That's why it's so important, that's why we're going to get it done, that's why I need your help, Green Bay. Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:07 p.m. at Southwest High School. In his remarks, he referred to cancer patient Laura Klitzka, who introduced the President, her husband Pete, and their children Taylor and Logan; and Mary Pat Mallien, teacher, Aldo Leopold Community School. He also referred to his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng.

Statement on Senate Passage of Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Legislation
June 11, 2009

Today the Senate passed the "Family Smoking and Tobacco Control Act," which has enjoyed broad, bipartisan support in both Houses of Congress. Once the legislation is returned to the House for final passage, it will make history by giving the scientists and medical experts at the FDA the power to take sensible steps that will reduce tobacco's harmful effects and prevent tobacco companies from marketing their products to children.

Each year, Americans pay nearly $100 billion in added health care costs due to smoking. Each day, about 1,000 young people under the age of 18 become regular smokers. And at any given moment, millions are struggling with their habit or worrying about loved ones who smoke. My administration is committed to protecting our children and reforming our health care system, and moving forward with commonsense tobacco control measures is an integral part of that process. I look forward to signing this bill into law and to working with HHS Secretary Sebelius and FDA Commissioner Hamburg on its implementation.

NOTE: The statement referred to H.R. 1256.

Remarks on Congressional Passage of Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Legislation and an Exchange With Reporters
June 12, 2009

The President. Good afternoon. I just wanted to give a quick statement about the kids tobacco legislation that passed the Senate yesterday.

This bill has obviously been a long time coming. We've known for years, even decades, about the harmful, addictive, and often deadly effects of tobacco products. Each year, Americans pay nearly $100 billion in added health care costs due to smoking. Each day, about a thousand young people under the age of 18 become regular smokers.

For over a decade, leaders of both parties have fought to prevent tobacco companies from marketing their products to children and provide the public with the information they need to understand what a dangerous habit this is. And after a decade of opposition, all of us are finally about to achieve the victory with this bill, a bill that truly defines change in Washington.

I'm proud that the House and the Senate have acted swiftly and in an overwhelmingly bipartisan fashion to pass this legislation that will protect our kids and improve our public health. Along with legislation to protect credit card owners from unfair rate hikes, homeowners from mortgage fraud and abuse, and taxpayers from wasteful defense spending, this kids tobacco bill would be the fourth piece of bipartisan legislation that I've signed into law over the last month that protects the American consumer and changes the way Washington works and who Washington works for.

So I look forward to signing it. I want to thank all the people in the House and the Senate for working so hard to pass this bill in a bipartisan way. And I want to give a special shout-out to my legislative director, Phil Schiliro. He and his team have just done an outstanding job. They've been working on this for a long time, even before they joined the administration. I'm really proud of them.

All right. Thanks, guys. Have a great weekend.

Election in Iran

Q. Mr. President, how closely are you watching the Iranian elections? How critical is it to change?

The President. We are excited to see what appears to be a robust debate taking place in Iran. And obviously, after the speech that I

made in Cairo, we tried to send a clear message that we think there is the possibility of change. And ultimately, the election is for the Iranians to decide. But just as has been true in Lebanon, what can be true in Iran, as well, is that you're seeing people looking at new possibilities. And whoever ends up winning the election in Iran, the fact that there's been a robust debate, hopefully, will help advance our ability to engage them in new ways.

All right? Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs Philip M. Schiliro. The President also referred to H.R. 1256.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai of Zimbabwe

June 12, 2009

President Obama. Well, I want to welcome Prime Minister Tsvangirai to the Oval Office. He and his delegation have been meeting with my team throughout the day. I, obviously, have extraordinary admiration for the courage and the tenacity that the Prime Minister has shown in navigating through some very difficult political times in Zimbabwe.

There was a time when Zimbabwe was the bread basket of Africa and continues to have enormous potential. It has gone through a very dark and difficult period politically. The President—President Mugabe, I think I've made my views clear, has not acted oftentimes in the best interest of the Zimbabwean people and has been resistant to the kinds of democratic changes that need to take place.

We now have a power-sharing agreement that shows promise, and we want to do everything we can to encourage the kinds of improvement not only on human rights and rule of law, freedom of the press, and democracy that is so necessary, but also on the economic front. The people of Zimbabwe need very concrete things: schools that are reopened; a health care delivery system that can deal with issues like cholera or HIV/AIDS; an agricultural system that is able to feed its people. And on all these fronts, I think the Prime Minister is committed to significant concrete improvement in the day-to-day lives of the people of Zimbabwe.

I congratulate him; they've been able to bring inflation under control after hyperinflation that was really tearing at the fabric of the economy. We're starting to see, slowly, some improvements in capacity—industrial capacity there. So overall, in a very difficult circumstance, we've seen progress from the Prime Minister.

We are grateful to him. We want to encourage him to continue to make progress. The United States is a friend to the people of Zimbabwe. I've committed $73 million in assistance to Zimbabwe. It will not be going through the Government directly because we continue to be concerned about consolidating democracy, human rights, and rule of law, but it will be going directly to the people in Zimbabwe, and I think can be of assistance to the Prime Minister in his efforts. He's going to continue to provide us with direction in ways that he thinks we can be helpful. And I'm grateful to him for his leadership, for his courage, and I'm looking forward to being a partner with him in the years to come.

Mr. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Tsvangirai. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for receiving us. I'm sure that—I want to take the opportunity of congratulating you, although belatedly, for being elected the President. And I think it's a profound experience for some of us who are committed to change, and hopefully that—the Prime Minister, who is committed to change, and the President, who is committed to change, find common convergence in position.

I've been explaining to the President that Zimbabwe is coming out of a political conflict and economic collapse or decay, and that the new political dispensation we have crafted is an attempt to arrest this decay. But also mindful of the fact that it is a journey; this is a transitional

arrangement. We want to institute those reforms that will ensure that in 18 months' time the people of Zimbabwe are given an opportunity to elect their own Government.

Yes, there have been a lot of progress, or progress made by the transitional Government, but there are also problems. It is the problems of implementation, and I do recognize that even by the standard of our own benchmarks, there are gaps that still exist and that we will strive. And I want to show my—to express my commitment that we will strive to implement those benchmarks, not because they are for the international community, but because for ourselves it gives people of Zimbabwe freedom and opportunity to grow.

I want to say, lastly—I want to thank you for that demonstrable leadership in assisting the people of Zimbabwe, and I want to take the opportunity to thank the humanitarian support that the West—we have experienced over the years and the continued expression of support. And of course, we continue to engage in ensuring that that support consolidates the process towards democratic change rather than strengthens a reverse in defense of the status quo.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

President Obama. Thank you so much. Thank you, everybody. Have a great weekend.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:04 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Statement on World Day Against Child Labor
June 12, 2009

Even in this modern era, children around the world are forced to work in deplorable and often dangerous conditions at a time in their lives when they should be in classrooms and playgrounds. Global child labor perpetuates a cycle of poverty that prevents families and nations from reaching their full potential. That's why, earlier this week, Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis reaffirmed my administration's commitment to this issue by announcing $60 million to fight child labor.

I also find it fitting that this year's World Day Against Child Labor focuses on drawing attention to the particular plight young girls face. Of the 218 million child laborers worldwide, 100 million are girls, more than half of whom are exposed to hazardous work. That's unacceptable, and this world cannot allow it. We must stand united in opposition to child labor and recommit ourselves to ending this practice in all its forms, today and every day.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Actions and Policies of Certain Members of the Government of Belarus and Other Persons That Undermine Democratic Processes or Institutions in Belarus
June 12, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency and related measures blocking the

property of certain persons undermining democratic processes or institutions in Belarus are to continue in effect beyond June 16, 2009.

Despite some positive developments during the past year, including the release of internationally recognized political prisoners, the actions and policies of certain members of the Government of Belarus and other persons that have undermined democratic processes or institutions, committed human rights abuses related to political repression, and engaged in public corruption pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency and related measures blocking the property of certain persons undermining democratic processes or institutions in Belarus.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 12, 2009.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's Weekly Address
June 13, 2009

Last week, I spoke to you about my commitment to work with Congress to pass health care reform this year. Today I'd like to speak about how that effort is essential to restoring fiscal responsibility.

When it comes to the cost of health care, this much is clear: The status quo is unsustainable for families, businesses, and government. America spends nearly 50 percent more per person on health care than any other country. Health care premiums have doubled over the last decade, deductibles and out-of-pocket costs have skyrocketed, and many with preexisting conditions are denied coverage. More and more, Americans are being priced out of the care they need.

These costs are also hurting business, as some big businesses are at a competitive disadvantage with their foreign counterparts and some small businesses are forced to cut benefits, drop coverage, or even lay off workers. Meanwhile, Medicare and Medicaid pose one of the greatest threats to our Federal deficit and could leave our children with a mountain of debt that they cannot pay.

We cannot continue down this path. I don't accept a future where Americans forego health care because they can't pay for it and more and more families go without coverage at all. And I don't accept a future where American business is hurt and our Government goes broke. We have a responsibility to act, and to act now. That's why I'm working with Congress to pass reform that lowers costs, improves quality and coverage, and protects consumer health care choices.

I know some question whether we can afford to act this year, but the unmistakable truth is it would be irresponsible to not act. We can't keep shifting a growing burden to future generations. With each passing year, health care costs consume a larger share of our Nation's spending and contribute to yawning deficits that we can't control. So let me be clear: Health care reform is not part of the problem when it comes to our fiscal future, it's a fundamental part of the solution.

Real reform will mean reductions in our long-term budget. And I have made a firm commitment that health care reform will not add to the Federal deficit over the next decade. To keep that commitment, my administration has already identified how to pay for the historic $635 billion downpayment on reform detailed in our budget. This includes over $300 billion that we will save through changes like reducing Medicare overpayments to private insurers and rooting out waste in Medicare and Medicaid.

However, any honest accounting must prepare for the fact that health care reform will require additional costs in the short term, in order to reduce spending in the long term. So today I am announcing an additional $313 billion in savings that will rein in unnecessary spending

and increase efficiency and the quality of care; savings that will ensure that we have nearly $950 billion set aside to offset the cost of health care reform over the next 10 years.

These savings will come from commonsense changes. For example, if more Americans are insured, we can cut payments that help hospitals treat patients without health insurance. If the drug makers pay their fair share, we can cut Government spending on prescription drugs. And if doctors have incentives to provide the best care instead of more care, we can help Americans avoid the unnecessary hospital stays, treatments, and tests that drive up costs. For more details about these and other savings, you can visit our web site, www.whitehouse.gov.

These savings underscore the fact that securing quality, affordable health care for the American people is tied directly to insisting upon fiscal responsibility. And these savings are rooted in the same principle that must guide our broader approach to reform. We will fix what's broken, while building upon what works. If you like your plan and your doctor, you can keep them. The only changes that you'll see are lower costs and better health care.

For too long, we've stood by while our health care system has frayed at the seams. While there has been excuse after excuse to delay reform, the price of care has gone up for individuals, for business, and for the Government. This time must be different. This is the moment when we must reform health care so that we can build a new foundation for our economy to grow, for our people to thrive, and for our country to pursue a responsible and sustainable path. Thanks.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 1:30 p.m. on June 12 in the Red Room at the White House for broadcast on June 13. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 12 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 13.

Remarks to the American Medical Association National Conference in Chicago, Illinois
June 15, 2009

The President. Thank you so much. Good to see you. Thank you. Thank you so much. Please, everybody be seated. Thank you very much. You're very kind. Thank you.

Let me begin by thanking Nancy for the wonderful introduction. I want to thank Dr. Joseph Heyman, the chair of the board of the trustees, as well as Dr. Jeremy Lazarus, speaker of House of Delegates. Thanks to all of you for bringing me home, even if it's just for a day.

From the moment I took office as President, the central challenge we've confronted as a nation has been the need to lift ourselves out of the worst recession since World War II. And in recent months, we've taken a series of extraordinary steps, not just to repair the immediate damage to our economy, but to build a new foundation for lasting and sustained growth. We're here to create new jobs, to unfreeze our credit markets. We're stemming the loss of homes and the decline of home values.

All this is important. But even as we've made progress, we know that the road to prosperity remains long and it remains difficult. And we also know that one essential step on our journey is to control the spiraling cost of health care in America. And in order to do that, we're going to need the help of the AMA.

Today, we are spending over $2 trillion a year on health care, almost 50 percent more per person than the next most costly nation. And yet, as I think many of you are aware, for all of this spending, more of our citizens are uninsured, the quality of our care is often lower, and we aren't any healthier. In fact, citizens in some countries that spend substantially less than we do are actually living longer than we do.

Make no mistake, the cost of our health care is a threat to our economy. It's an escalating

burden on our families and businesses. It's a ticking time bomb for the Federal budget. And it is unsustainable for the United States of America.

It's unsustainable for Americans like Laura Klitzka, a young mother that I met in Wisconsin just last week, who's learned that the breast cancer she thought she'd beaten had spread to her bones, but who's now being forced to spend time worrying about how to cover the $50,000 in medical debts she's already accumulated, worried about future debts that she's going to accumulate, when all she wants to do is spend time with her two children and focus on getting well. These are not the worries that a woman like Laura should have to face in a nation as wealthy as ours.

Stories like Laura's are being told by women and men all across this country, by families who've seen out-of-pocket costs soar and premiums double over the last decade at a rate three times faster than wages. This is forcing Americans of all ages to go without the checkups or the prescriptions they need—that you know they need. It's creating a situation where a single illness can wipe out a lifetime of savings.

Our costly health care system is unsustainable for doctors like Michael Kahn in New Hampshire, who, as he puts it, spends 20 percent of each day supervising a staff, explaining insurance problems to patients, completing authorization forms, writing appeal letters—a routine that he calls disruptive and distracting, giving him less time to do what he became a doctor to do and actually care for his patients.

Small-business owners like Chris and Becky Link in Nashville are also struggling. They've always wanted to do right by the workers at their family-run marketing firm, but they've recently had to do the unthinkable and lay off a number of employees, layoffs that could have been deferred, they say, if health care costs weren't so high. Across the country, over one-third of small businesses have reduced benefits in recent years and one-third have dropped their workers' coverage altogether since the early nineties.

Our largest companies are suffering as well. A big part of what led General Motors and Chrysler into trouble in recent decades were the huge costs they racked up providing health care for their workers, costs that made them less profitable and less competitive with automakers around the world. If we do not fix our health care system, America may go the way of GM—paying more, getting less, and going broke.

Now, when it comes to the cost of our health care, then, the status quo is unsustainable. So reform is not a luxury; it is a necessity. When I hear people say, "Well, why are you taking this on right now? You've got all these other problems," I keep on reminding people I'd love to be able to defer these issues, but we can't. I know there's been much discussion about what reform would cost, and rightly so. This is a test of whether we, Democrats and Republicans alike, are serious about holding the line on new spending and restoring fiscal discipline.

But let there be no doubt: the cost of inaction is greater. If we fail to act—and you know this because you see it in your own individual practices—if we fail to act, premiums will climb higher, benefits will erode further, the rolls of the uninsured will swell to include millions more Americans, all of which will affect your practice.

If we fail to act, one out of every five dollars we earn will be spent on health care within a decade. And in 30 years, it will be about one out of every three, a trend that will mean lost jobs, lower take-home pay, shuttered businesses, and a lower standard of living for all Americans.

And if we fail to act, Federal spending on Medicaid and Medicare will grow over the coming decades by an amount almost equal to the amount our Government currently spends on our Nation's defense. It will, in fact, eventually grow larger than what our Government spends on anything else today. It's a scenario that will swamp our Federal and State budgets, and impose a vicious choice of either unprecedented tax hikes, or overwhelming deficits, or drastic cuts in our Federal and State budgets.

So to say it as plainly as I can, health care is the single most important thing we can do for America's long-term fiscal health. That is a fact. [*Applause*] That's a fact.

It's a fact, and the truth is most people know that it's a fact. And yet, as clear as it is that our system badly needs reform, reform is not inevitable. There's a sense out there among some, and perhaps some members who are gathered here today of the AMA, that as bad as our current system may be—and it's pretty bad—the devil we know is better than the devil we don't. There's a fear of change, a worry that we may lose what works about our health care system while trying to fix what doesn't.

I'm here to tell you I understand that fear, and I understand the cynicism. They're scars left over from past efforts at reform. After all, Presidents have called for health care reform for nearly a century: Teddy Roosevelt called for it; Harry Truman called for it; Richard Nixon called for it; Jimmy Carter called for it; Bill Clinton called for it. But while significant individual reforms have been made—such as Medicare and Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program—efforts at comprehensive reform that covers everyone and brings down costs have largely failed.

And part of the reason is because the different groups involved—doctors, insurance companies, businesses, workers, and others—simply couldn't agree on the need for reform or what shape it would take. And if we're honest, another part of the reason has been the fierce opposition fueled by some interest groups and lobbyists, opposition that has used fear tactics to paint any effort to achieve reform as an attempt to, yes, socialize medicine.

And despite this long history of failure, I'm standing here because I think we're in a different time. One sign that things are different is that just this past week, the Senate passed a bill that will protect children from the dangers of smoking, a reform the AMA has long championed—[*applause*]—this organization long championed; it went nowhere when it was proposed a decade ago—I'm going to sign this into law.

Now, what makes this moment different is that this time, for the first time, key stakeholders are aligning not against, but in favor of reform. They're coming out—they're coming together out of a recognition that while reform will take everyone in our health care community to do their part—everybody's going to have to pitch in—ultimately, everybody will benefit.

And I want to commend the AMA, in particular, for offering to do your part to curb costs and achieve reform. Just a week ago, you joined together with hospitals, labor unions, insurers, medical device manufacturers, and drug companies to do something that would have been unthinkable just a few years ago, you promised to work together to cut national health care spending by $2 trillion over the next decade, relative to what it would have otherwise been. And that will bring down costs; that will bring down premiums. That's exactly the kind of cooperation we need, and we appreciate that very much. Thank you.

Now, the question is how do we finish the job? How do we permanently bring down costs and make quality, affordable health care available to every single American? That's what I've come to talk about today. We know the moment is right for health care reform. We know this is a historic opportunity we've never seen before and may not see again. But we also know that there are those who will try and scuttle this opportunity no matter what, who will use the same scare tactics and fearmongering that's worked in the past; who will give warnings about socialized medicine and Government takeovers, long lines and rationed care, decisions made by bureaucrats and not doctors. We have heard this all before. And because these fear tactics have worked, things have kept getting worse.

So let me begin by saying this to you and to the American people: I know that there are millions of Americans who are content with their health care coverage; they like their plan and, most importantly, they value their relationship with their doctor. They trust you. And that means that no matter how we reform health care, we will keep this promise to the American people: If you like your doctor, you will be able to keep your doctor, period. If you like your health care plan, you'll be able to keep your health care plan, period. No one will take it away, no matter what. My view is that health care reform should be guided by a

simple principle: Fix what's broken and build on what works. And that's what we intend to do.

If we do that, we can build a health care system that allows you to be physicians instead of administrators and accountants; a system that gives Americans the best care at the lowest cost; a system that eases up the pressure on businesses and unleashes the promise of our economy, creating hundreds of thousands of jobs, making take-home wages thousands of dollars higher, and growing our economy by tens of billions of dollars more every year. That's how we'll stop spending tax dollars to prop up an unsustainable system, and start investing those dollars in innovations and advances that will make our health care system and our economy stronger. That's what we can do with this opportunity. And that's what we must do with this moment.

Now, the good news is that in some instances, there's already widespread agreement on the steps necessary to make our health care system work better.

First, we need to upgrade our medical records by switching from a paper to an electronic system of record keeping. And we've already begun to do this with an investment we made as part of our Recovery Act. It simply doesn't make sense that patients in the 21st century are still filling out forms with pens on papers that have to be stored away somewhere. As Newt Gingrich has rightly pointed out—and I don't quote Newt Gingrich that often—[*laughter*]—we do a better job tracking a FedEx package in this country than we do tracking patients' health records.

You shouldn't have to tell every new doctor you see about your medical history or what prescriptions you're taking. You shouldn't have to repeat costly tests. All that information should be stored securely in a private medical record so that your information can be tracked from one doctor to another, even if you change jobs, even if you move, even if you have to see a number of different specialists. That's just common sense.

And that will not only mean less paper-pushing and lower administrative costs, saving taxpayers billions of dollars; it will also mean all of you physicians will have an easier time doing your jobs. It will tell you, the doctors, what drugs a patient is taking so you can avoid prescribing a medication that could cause a harmful interaction. It will prevent the wrong dosages from going to a patient. It will reduce medical errors, it's estimated, that lead to 100,000 lives lost unnecessarily in our hospitals every year. So there shouldn't be an argument there. And we want to make sure that we're helping providers computerize so that we can get this system up and running.

The second step that we can all agree on is to invest more in preventive care so we can avoid illness and disease in the first place. And that starts with each of us taking more responsibility for our health and for the health of our children. It means quitting smoking. It means going in for that mammogram or colon cancer screening. It means going for a run or hitting the gym, and raising our children to step away from the video games and spend more time playing outside.

It also means cutting down on all the junk food that's fueling an epidemic of obesity, which puts far too many Americans, young and old, at greater risk of costly, chronic conditions. And that's a lesson Michelle and I have tried to instill in our daughters. As some of you know, we started a White House vegetable garden. I say "we" generously, because Michelle has done most of the work. [*Laughter*] That's a lesson that we should work with local school districts to incorporate into their school lunch programs.

Building a health care system that promotes prevention rather than just managing diseases will require all of us to do our parts. It will take doctors telling us what risk factors we should avoid and what preventive measures we should pursue. It will take employers following the example of places like Safeway that is rewarding workers for taking better care of their health while reducing health care costs in the process.

If you're one of three-quarters of Safeway workers enrolled in their "Healthy Measures" program, you can get screened for problems like high cholesterol or high blood pressure. And if you score well, you can pay lower premiums; you get more money in your paycheck. It's a program that has helped Safeway cut health care spending by 13 percent, and workers save over 20 percent on their premiums. And we're

open to doing more to help employers adopt and expand programs like this one.

Now, our Federal Government also has to step up its efforts to advance the cause of healthy living. Five of the costliest illnesses and conditions—cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, lung disease, and strokes—can be prevented. And yet only a fraction of every health care dollar goes to prevention or public health. And that's starting to change with an investment we're making in prevention and wellness programs that can help us avoid disease that harm our health and the health of our economy.

But as important as they are, investments in electronic records and preventive care, all the things that I've just mentioned, they're just preliminary steps. They will only make a dent in the epidemic of rising costs in this country.

Despite what some have suggested, the reason we have these spiraling costs is not simply because we've got an aging population; demographics do account for part of rising costs because older, sicker societies pay more on health care than younger, healthier ones, and there's nothing intrinsically wrong in us taking better care of ourselves. But what accounts for the bulk of our costs is the nature of our health care delivery system itself, a system where we spend vast amounts of money on things that aren't necessarily making our people any healthier; a system that automatically equates more expensive care with better care.

Now, a recent article in the New Yorker, for example, showed how McAllen, Texas, is spending twice as much as El Paso County—twice as much—not because people in McAllen, Texas, are sicker than they are in El Paso, not because they're getting better care or getting better outcomes. It's simply because they're using more treatments, treatments that, in some cases, they don't really need; treatments that, in some cases, can actually do people harm by raising the risk of infection or medical error.

And the problem is this pattern is repeating itself across America. One Dartmouth study shows that you're less likely—you're no less likely to die from a heart attack and other ailments in a higher-spending area than in a lower-spending one.

And there are two main reasons for this. The first is a system of incentives where the more tests and services are provided, the more money we pay. And a lot of people in this room know what I'm talking about. It's a model that rewards the quantity of care rather than the quality of care; that pushes you, the doctor, to see more and more patients even if you can't spend much time with each, and gives you every incentive to order that extra MRI or EKG, even if it's not necessary. It's a model that has taken the pursuit of medicine from a profession—a calling—to a business.

That's not why you became doctors. That's not why you put in all those hours in the anatomy suite or the O.R. That's not what brings you back to a patient's bedside to check in, or makes you call a loved one of a patient to say it will be fine. You didn't enter this profession to be bean-counters and paper-pushers. You entered this profession to be healers. And that's what our health care system should let you be. [*Applause*] That's what this health care system should let you be.

Now, that starts with reforming the way we compensate our providers, doctors and hospitals. We need to bundle payments so you aren't paid for every single treatment you offer a patient with a chronic condition like diabetes, but instead paid well for how you treat the overall disease. We need to create incentives for physicians to team up, because we know that when that happens, it results in a healthier patient. We need to give doctors bonuses for good health outcomes, so we're not promoting just more treatment, but better care.

And we need to rethink the cost of a medical education, and do more to reward medical students who choose a career as a primary care physician, who choose to work in underserved areas instead of the more lucrative paths. That's why we're making a substantial investment in the National Health Service Corps that will make medical training more affordable for primary care doctors and nurse practitioners so they aren't drowning in debt when they enter the workforce.

[*Applause*] Somebody back there is drowning in debt, they were applauding. [*Laughter*]

The second structural reform we need to make is to improve the quality of medical information making its way to doctors and patients. We have the best medical schools, the most sophisticated labs, the most advanced training of any nation on the globe. Yet we're not doing a very good job harnessing our collective knowledge and experience on behalf of better medicine.

Less than 1 percent of our health care spending goes to examining what treatments are most effective—less than 1 percent. And even when that information finds its way into journals, it can take up to 17 years to find its way to an exam room or operating table. As a result, too many doctors and patients are making decisions without the benefit of the latest research.

A recent study, for example, found that only half of all cardiac guidelines are based on scientific evidence—half. That means doctors may be doing a bypass operation when placing a stent is equally effective; or placing a stent when adjusting a patient's drug and medical management is equally effective, all of which drives up costs without improving a patient's health.

So one thing we need to do is to figure out what works, and encourage rapid implementation of what works into your practices. That's why we're making a major investment in research to identify the best treatments for a variety of ailments and conditions.

Now, let me be clear—I just want to clear something up here—identifying what works is not about dictating what kind of care should be provided. It's about providing patients and doctors with the information they need to make the best medical decisions. See, I have the assumption that if you have good information about what makes your patients well, that's what you're going to do. I have confidence in that. We're not going to need to force you to do it. We just need to make sure you've got the best information available.

Still, even when we do know what works, we are often not making the most of it. And that's why we need to build on the examples of outstanding medicine at places like the Cincinnati Children's Hospital, where the quality of care for cystic fibrosis patients shot up after the hospital began incorporating suggestions from parents. And places like Tallahassee Memorial Health Care, where deaths were dramatically reduced with rapid response teams that monitored patients' conditions and "multidisciplinary rounds" with everyone from physicians to pharmacists. And places like Geisinger Health System in rural Pennsylvania, and Intermountain Health in Salt Lake City, where high-quality care is being provided at a cost well below the national average. These are all islands of excellence that we need to make the standard in our health care system.

So replicating best practices, incentivizing excellence, closing cost disparities—any legislation sent to my desk that does not these—does not achieve these goals in my mind does not earn the title of reform.

But my signature on a bill is not enough. I need your help, doctors, because to most Americans you are the health care system. The fact is Americans—and I include myself and Michelle and our kids in this—we just do what you tell us to do. [*Laughter*] That's what we do. We listen to you, we trust you. And that's why I will listen to you and work with you to pursue reform that works for you.

Together, if we take all these steps, I am convinced we can bring spending down, bring quality up; we can save hundreds of billions of dollars on health care costs while making our health care system work better for patients and doctors alike. And when we align the interests of patients and doctors, then we're going to be in a good place.

Now, I recognize that it will be hard to make some of these changes if doctors feel like they're constantly looking over their shoulders for fear of lawsuits. I recognize that. Don't get too excited yet. [*Applause*] All right.

Now, I understand some doctors may feel the need to order more tests and treatments to avoid being legally vulnerable. That's a real issue. Now, just hold on to your horses here, guys. [*Laughter*] I want to be honest with you. I'm not advocating caps on malpractice awards——

Audience members. Boo!

The President. ——[*laughter*]—which I believe—I personally believe can be unfair to people who've been wrongfully harmed.

But I do think we need to explore a range of ideas about how to put patient safety first; how to let doctors focus on practicing medicine; how to encourage broader use of evidence-based guidelines. I want to work with the AMA so we can scale back the excessive defensive medicine that reinforces our current system, and shift to a system where we are providing better care, simply—rather than simply more treatment.

So this is going to be a priority for me. And I know, based on your responses, it's a priority for you. [*Laughter*] And I look forward to working with you. And it's going to be difficult. But all this stuff is going to be difficult. All of it's going to be important.

Now, I know this has been a long speech, but we got more to do. [*Laughter*] The changes that I have already spoken about, all that is going to need to go hand in hand with other reforms. Because our health care system is so complex and medicine is always evolving, we need a way to continually evaluate how we can eliminate waste, reduce costs, and improve quality.

That's why I'm open to expanding the role of a commission created by a Republican Congress called the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission, which happens to include a number of physicians on the commission. In recent years, this commission proposed roughly $200 billion in savings that never made it into law. These recommendations have now been incorporated into our broader reform agenda, but we need to fast track their proposals, the commission's proposals, in the future so that we don't miss another opportunity to save billions of dollars, as we gain more information about what works and what doesn't work in our health care system.

And as we seek to contain the cost of health care, we also have to ensure that every American can get coverage they can afford. We must do so in part because it's in all of our economic interests. Each time an uninsured American steps foot into an emergency room with no way to reimburse the hospital for care, the cost is handed over to every American family as a bill of about $1,000. It's reflected in higher taxes, higher premiums, and higher health care costs. It's a hidden tax, a hidden bill that will be cut as we insure all Americans. And as we insure every young and healthy American, it will spread out risk for insurance companies, further reducing costs for everyone.

But alongside these economic arguments, there's another, more powerful one. And it is simply this: We are not a nation that accepts nearly 46 million uninsured men, women, and children. We are not a nation that lets hard-working families go without coverage, or turns its back on those in need. We're a nation that cares for its citizens. We look out for one another. That's what makes us the United States of America. We need to get this done.

So we need to do a few things to provide affordable health insurance to every single American. The first thing we need to do is to protect what's working in our health care system. So just in case you didn't catch it the first time, let me repeat: If you like your health care system and your doctor, the only thing reform will mean to you is your health care will cost less. If anyone says otherwise, they are either trying to mislead you or don't have their facts straight.

Now, if you don't like your health care coverage or you don't have any insurance at all, you'll have a chance, under what we've proposed, to take part in what we're calling a health insurance exchange. And this exchange will allow you to one-stop shop for a health care plan, compare benefits and prices, and choose a plan that's best for you and your family—the same way, by the way, that Federal employees can do, from a postal worker to a Member of Congress. You will have your choice of a number of plans that offer a few different packages, but every plan would offer an affordable, basic package.

Again, this is for people who aren't happy with their current plan. If you like what you're getting, keep it. Nobody is forcing you to shift. But if you're not, this gives you some new options. And I believe one of these options needs to be a public option that will give people a broader range of choices, and inject

competition into the health care market so that force—so that we can force waste out of the system and keep the insurance companies honest.

Now, I know that there's some concern about a public option. Even within this organization there's healthy debate about it. In particular, I understand that you're concerned that today's Medicare rates, which many of you already feel are too low, will be applied broadly in a way that means our cost savings are coming off your backs. And these are legitimate concerns, but they're ones, I believe, that can be overcome. As I stated earlier, the reforms we propose to reimbursement are to reward best practices, focus on patient care, not on the current piecework reimbursements. What we seek is more stability and a health care system that's on a sounder financial footing.

And the fact is these reforms need to take place regardless of whether there's a public option or not. With reform, we will ensure that you are being reimbursed in a thoughtful way that's tied to patient outcomes, instead of relying on yearly negotiations about the sustainable growth rate formula that's based on politics and the immediate State of the Federal budget in any given year.

And I just want to point out the alternative to such reform is a world where health care costs grow at an unsustainable rate. And if you don't think that's going to threaten your reimbursements and the stability of our health care system, you haven't been paying attention. So the public option is not your enemy; it is your friend, I believe.

Let me also say that—let me also address a illegitimate concern that's being put forward by those who are claiming that a public option is somehow a Trojan horse for a single-payer system. I'll be honest, there are countries where a single-payer system works pretty well. But I believe—and I've taken some flak from members of my own party for this belief—that it's important for our reform efforts to build on our traditions here in the United States. So when you hear the naysayers claim that I'm trying to bring about government-run health care, know this: They're not telling the truth.

What I am trying to do—and what a public option will help do—is put affordable health care within reach for millions of Americans. And to help ensure that everyone can afford the cost of a health care option in our exchange, we need to provide assistance to families who need it. That way, there will be no reason at all for anyone to remain uninsured.

Indeed, it's because I'm confident in our ability to give people the ability to get insurance at an affordable rate that I'm open to a system where every American bears responsibility for owning health insurance, so long as we provide a hardship waiver for those who still can't afford it as we move towards this system.

The same is true for employers. While I believe every business has a responsibility to provide health insurance for its workers, small businesses that can't afford it should receive an exemption. And small-business workers and their families will be able to seek coverage in the exchange if their employer is not able to provide it.

Now, here's some good news. Insurance companies have expressed support for the idea of covering the uninsured and they certainly are in favor of a mandate. I welcome their willingness to engage constructively in the reform debate. I'm glad they're at the table. But what I refuse to do is simply create a system where insurance companies suddenly have a whole bunch of more customers on Uncle Sam's dime, but still fail to meet their responsibilities. We're not going to do that.

Let me give you an example of what I'm talking about. We need to end the practice of denying coverage on the basis of preexisting conditions. The days of cherry-picking who to cover and who to deny, those days are over. I know you see it in your practices, and how incredibly painful and frustrating it is; you want to give somebody care and you find out that the insurance companies are wiggling out of paying.

This is personal for me also. I've told this story before. I'll never forget watching my own mother, as she fought cancer in her final days, spending time worrying about whether her insurer would claim her illness was a preexisting condition so it could get out of providing coverage. Changing the current approach to

preexisting conditions is the least we can do, for my mother and for every other mother, father, son, and daughter, who has suffered under this practice, who've been paying premiums and don't get care. We need to put health care within the reach for millions of Americans.

Now, even if we accept all of the economic and moral reasons for providing affordable coverage to all American, there is no denying that expanding coverage will come at a cost, at least in the short run. But it is a cost that will not—I repeat—will not add to our deficits. I've set down a rule for my staff, for my team—and I've said this to Congress—health care reform must be, and will be, deficit neutral in the next decade.

Now, there are already voices saying the numbers don't add up; they're wrong. Here's why: Making health care affordable for all Americans will cost somewhere on the order of $1 trillion over the next 10 years. That's real money, even in Washington. [*Laughter*] But remember, that's less than we are projected to have spent on the war in Iraq. And also remember, failing to reform our health care system in a way that genuinely reduces cost growth will cost us trillions of dollars more in lost economic growth and lower wages.

That said, let me explain how we will cover the price tag. First, as part of the budget that was passed a few months ago, we put aside $635 billion over 10 years in what we're calling a health reserve fund. Over half of that amount, more than $300 billion, will come from raising revenue by doing things like modestly limiting the tax deductions the wealthiest Americans can take to the same level that it was at the end of the Reagan years—same level that it was under Ronald Reagan. Some are concerned that this will dramatically reduce charitable giving, for example, but statistics show that's not true. And the best thing for our charities is the stronger economy that we will build with health care reform.

But we can't just raise revenues. We're also going to have to make spending cuts, in part by examining inefficiencies in our current Medicare program. There are going to be robust debates about where these cuts should be made, and I welcome that debate. But here's where I think these cuts should be made: First, we should end overpayments to Medicare Advantage. Today, we're paying Medicare Advantage plans much more than we pay for traditional Medicare services. Now, this is a good deal for insurance companies. It's a subsidy to insurance companies. It's not a good deal for you. It's not a good deal for the American people. And by the way, it doesn't follow free market principles, for those who are always talking about free market principles. That's why we need to introduce competitive bidding into the Medicare Advantage program, a program under which private insurance companies are offering Medicare coverage. That alone will save $177 billion over the next decade, just that one step.

Second, we need to use Medicare reimbursements to reduce preventable hospital readmissions. Right now, almost 20 percent of Medicare patients discharged from hospitals are readmitted within a month, often because they're not getting the comprehensive care that they need. This puts people at risk; it drives up cost. By changing how Medicare reimburses hospitals, we can discourage them from acting in a way that boosts profits but drives up costs for everyone else. That will save us $25 billion over the next decade.

Third, we need to introduce generic biologic drugs into the marketplace. These are drugs used to treat illnesses like anemia. But right now, there is no pathway at the FDA for approving generic versions of these drugs. Creating such a pathway will save us billions of dollars. We can save another roughly $30 billion by getting a better deal for our poorer seniors while asking our well-off seniors to pay a little more for their drugs.

So that's the bulk of what's in the Health Reserve Fund. I've also proposed saving another $313 billion in Medicare and Medicaid spending in several other ways. One way is by adjusting Medicare payments to reflect new advances and productivity gains in our economy. Right now Medicare payments are rising each year by more than they should. These adjustments will create incentives for providers

to deliver care more efficiently, and save us roughly $109 billion in the process.

Another way we can achieve savings is by reducing payments to hospitals for treating uninsured people. I know hospitals rely on these payments now, legitimately, because of the large number of uninsured patients that they treat. But if we put in a system where people have coverage and the number of uninsured people goes down with our reforms, the amount we pay hospitals to treat uninsured people should go down as well. Reducing these payments gradually, as more and more people have coverage, will save us over $106 billion, and we'll make sure the difference goes to the hospitals that need it most.

We can also save about $75 billion through more efficient purchasing of prescription drugs. And we can save about $1 billion more by rooting out waste, abuse, fraud throughout our health care system so that no one is charging more for a service than it's worth or charging a dime for a service that they don't provide.

Let me be clear: I'm committed to making these cuts in a way that protects our senior citizens. In fact, these proposals will actually extend the life of the Medicare Trust Fund by 7 years, and reduce premiums for Medicare beneficiaries by roughly $43 billion over the next 10 years. And I'm working with AARP to uphold that commitment.

Now, for those of you who took out your pencil and paper—[*laughter*]—altogether, these savings mean that we've put about $950 billion on the table—and that doesn't count some of the long-term savings that we think will come about from reform—from medical IT, for example, or increased investment in prevention. So that stuff in congressional jargon is not scorable; the Congressional Budget Office won't count that as savings, so we're setting that aside. We think that's going to come, but even separate and far from that, we've put $950 billion on the table, taking us almost all the way to covering the full cost of health care reform.

In the weeks and months ahead, I look forward to working with Congress to make up the difference so that health care reform is fully paid for in a real, accountable way. And let me add that this does not count longer-term savings. I just want to repeat that. By insisting that the reforms that we're introducing are deficit neutral over the next decade, and by making the reforms that will help slow the growth rate of health care costs over the coming decades—bending the curve—we can look forward to faster economic growth, higher living standards, and falling, instead of rising, budget deficits.

Now, let me just wrap up by saying this. I know people are cynical whether we can do this or not. I know there will be disagreements about how to proceed in the days ahead. There's probably healthy debate within the AMA. That's good. I also know this: We can't let this moment pass us by.

You know, the other day, a friend of mine, Congressman Earl Blumenauer, handed me a magazine with a special issue titled, "The Crisis in American Medicine." One article notes "soaring charges." Another warns about the "volume of utilization of services." Another asks if we can find a "better way than fee-for-service for paying for medical care." It speaks to many of the challenges we face today. The thing is, this special issue was published by Harper's Magazine in October of 1960—[*laughter*]—before I was born. [*Laughter*]

Members of the American Medical Association, and my fellow Americans, I'm here today because I don't want our children and their children to still be speaking of a crisis in American medicine 50 years from now. I don't want them to still be suffering from spiraling costs that we did not stem, or sicknesses that we did not cure. I don't want them to be burdened with massive deficits we did not curb or a worsening economy that we did not rebuild.

I want them to benefit from a health care system that works for all of us; where families can open a doctor's bill without dreading what's inside; where parents are talking to their kids and getting them to get regular checkups, and testing themselves for preventable ailments; where parents are feeding their kids healthier food and kids are exercising more; where patients are spending more time with their doctors, and doctors can pull up on a computer all the medical information and latest research they'll ever want to know to meet patients'

needs; where orthopedists and nephrologists and oncologists are all working together to treat a single human being; where what's best about America's health care system has become the hallmark of America's health care system.

That's the health care system we can build. That's the future I'm convinced is within our reach. And if we're willing to come together and bring about that future, then we will not only make Americans healthier, we will not only unleash America's economic potential, but we will reaffirm the ideals that led you into this noble profession, and we'll build a health care system that lets all Americans heal.

Thank you very much, AMA. Appreciate you; thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:13 a.m. at the Hyatt Regency Chicago. In his remarks, he referred to Nancy H. Nielson, president, and Jeremy Lazarus, speaker of the House of Delegates, American Medical Association, who introduced the President; and former Speaker of the House of Representatives Newton L. Gingrich.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy and an Exchange With Reporters
June 15, 2009

President Obama. Good evening, everybody. *Buona sera*. I want to welcome Prime Minister Berlusconi here. He has proven to be a great friend of the United States. And he and I got to know each other at the G–20 summit. We are now in the process of planning the G–8 summit that Italy will be hosting. We emphasized the strong, historic ties between the United States and Italy. Our bilateral relationship has been marked by cooperation across the board, and I am extremely grateful for his friendship.

Just a couple of things that we specifically discussed. I, first of all, thanked the Prime Minister for his support of our policy of closing Guantanamo. This is not just talk. Italy has agreed to accept three specific detainees and has also been part of the leadership in Europe that today announced a framework in which European nations can accept detainees. And that was something that I was very appreciative of. It will give us an opportunity to create a lasting and durable international legal framework for dealing with terrorism that, I think, is very important on both sides of the Atlantic.

We discussed Afghanistan and Pakistan, where Italy has been a critical part of the coalition that is trying to assist Afghanistan in stabilizing itself and ensuring that it's not a safe haven for terrorism. We had an extensive discussion about my interest in pursuing nonproliferation as an important agenda for all people. And given that I'll be visiting Russia before I visit Italy for the G–8, Prime Minister Berlusconi, who has strong relationships with the Russians, was able to offer some insight in terms of how to approach reductions in nuclear arsenals. And that, hopefully, is going to be a topic at the G–8 summit as well.

And in addition to discussing the general situation in the world economy, which obviously will be a central topic of the G–8, we also discussed specifically the issue of food security and how G–8 nations can assist people who are in most desperate poverty to ensure that they're not slipping into hunger and further poverty. And that is going to be a major topic of the G–8 summit. And so I'm very appreciative of the leadership that Prime Minister Berlusconi has shown on that front.

So overall, I am very grateful to Prime Minister Berlusconi's leadership, his consistent friendship towards the United States. We have some of the strongest bilateral relations in the world. I am confident that that will continue as long as both of us are occupying our positions.

And so thank you very much for taking the time to visit.

Prime Minister Berlusconi. First of all, I would like to thank President Obama for his welcome and for the possibility offered us to provide our perspectives, our opinions on

many of the most difficult and hottest issues at international level. And we've discussed, as he already briefed you, many of the issues and the topics, and we went through in a detailed manner all of the 3 days of the G–8 summit. We want this G–8 to reach concrete solutions, and we want to reach concrete solutions on many extremely important issues.

Clearly, the first issue is the world economy, the economic crisis, and how to get out of this crisis. And we also discussed the work that our ministers of economy are carrying out right now to try and develop a body of principles and rules to prevent similar situations from happening, similar situations to the one we are experiencing right now.

We both agreed on the fact that the G–8 will certainly not be able to produce this body of rules, but this is going to be just one of the steps leading to that drafting of the rules. There will be then the G–20 summit in Pittsburgh, which will work on it, but the hope is to finally reach a body of rules which can be shared by everybody, which, however, are not going to affect or hinder the free expansion of the economy and trade.

And we've discussed other two important issues. One of them, which will be discussed in L'Aquila as well, is food security, as President Obama has already said. We hope that the countries there will make concrete efforts and concrete proposals. The United States has already promised to increase the aid to other countries, and they're going to make in the next 3 years huge amounts of money available. We try and will push the other European countries in the G–8, trying to persuade them to do the same.

And another important issue is that of climate change. And another important achievement we are aiming at is to reduce CO_2 emissions, something, however, which has to be contributed to by all countries and not only a limited number of them. And since the Doha round has reached a stop, we hope that by inviting Lamy, who is the director of the WTO, to attend the G–8 summit, in that we can try and give another push to the Doha round, hoping to achieve positive results.

Probably what I forgot to mention up to now is that the meeting in L'Aquila is not going to be confined to the G–8 countries. The next day, the second day, will be G–8-plus-6. The major economies of the world will be there; India, China, South Africa, Mexico, Brazil, and Egypt will attend the second day of meetings. There will be the major economies forum with the participation of South Korea, Indonesia, and Australia, and then there is another meeting, which will be attended also by the Netherlands, Spain, and Denmark, and we are going to have the four—all of these meetings together.

And the dinner will be attended also by the representatives of the main international organizations. And the third day, we are going to have the President of the African Union, the new representatives of the main African organizations, together with the representatives of some of the main African countries. We are going to discuss the development of this continent and the issue of hunger in that area.

And I can't but thank President Obama and express my warmest felt appreciation to him for—and this position is coming from a person that's been long enough in international politics so to chair for the third time the G–8 summit; the first one was in 1994, the second one in 2001, and now the third one—I want to express my appreciations for his deep knowledge and precision and accuracy with which he discusses all of the issues.

And the positions that he expresses are not only innovative positions looking at a different future, but they're always very concrete and absolutely based on common sense. And it is extremely comforting and a pleasure to see that the destiny of the biggest democracy in the world is, indeed, in very good hands.

President Obama. I hope my staff all caught that. [*Laughter*] Gibbs, write that down. [*Laughter*]

Let me call on a couple people. Steve Thomma at McClatchy. There you are.

Iran

Q. Mr. President, on Iran, does the disputed election results, the fact that there's been violence in the street, in any way change your willingness to meet with the—Mr. Ahmadi-nejad

without precondition? And also, do you have anything to say, any message to send to the people who are in the streets protesting, who believe their votes were stolen, and who are being attacked violently?

President Obama. Obviously, all of us have been watching the news from Iran. And I want to start off by being very clear that it is up to Iranians to make decisions about who Iran's leaders will be, that we respect Iranian sovereignty and want to avoid the United States being the issue inside of Iran, which sometimes the United States can be a handy political football—or discussions with the United States.

Having said all that, I am deeply troubled by the violence that I've been seeing on television. I think that the democratic process, free speech, the ability of people to peacefully dissent, all those are universal values and need to be respected. And whenever I see violence perpetrated on people who are peacefully dissenting, and whenever the American people see that, I think they're, rightfully, troubled.

My understanding is, is that the Iranian Government says that they are going to look into irregularities that have taken place. We weren't on the ground; we did not have observers there; we did not have international observers on hand, so I can't state definitively one way or another what happened with respect to the election. But what I can say is that there appears to be a sense on the part of people who were so hopeful and so engaged and so committed to democracy who now feel betrayed. And I think it's important that, moving forward, whatever investigations take place are done in a way that is not resulting in bloodshed and is not resulting in people being stifled in expressing their views.

Now, with respect to the United States and our interactions with Iran, I've always believed that as odious as I consider some of President Ahmadi-nejad's statements, as deep as the differences that exist between the United States and Iran on a range of core issues, that the use of tough, hard-headed diplomacy, diplomacy with no illusions about Iran and the nature of the differences between our two countries, is critical when it comes to pursuing a core set of our national security interests, specifically, making sure that we are not seeing a nuclear arms race in the Middle East triggered by Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon, making sure that Iran is not exporting terrorist activity. Those are core interests not just to the United States, but, I think, to a peaceful world in general.

We will continue to pursue a tough, direct dialog between our two countries, and we'll see where it takes us. But even as we do so, I think it would be wrong for me to be silent about what we've seen on the television over the last few days. And what I would say to those people who put so much hope and energy and optimism into the political process, I would say to them that the world is watching and inspired by their participation, regardless of what the ultimate outcome of the election was. And they should know that the world is watching.

And particularly to the youth of Iran, I want them to know that we in the United States do not want to make any decisions for the Iranians, but we do believe that the Iranian people and their voices should be heard and respected. Okay?

Prime Minister Berlusconi. ANSA.

Italy-U.S. Relations

Q. After this meeting with Prime Minister Berlusconi, what do you expect, in concrete terms, from the relationship between United States and Italy? And to Prime Minister Berlusconi, you had a very strong relationship with President George W. Bush. Do you expect and do you hope to build the same type of relations with President Obama as well?

Prime Minister Berlusconi. I took an oath of gratitude towards United States, which gave me freedom and which gave my country dignity after World War II. So I'm here to cooperate with the President of the United States. I'm here to cooperate with President Obama, as I cooperated with President Clinton and as I did with President Bush.

So if I can express a hope, I really hope we can build a direct and friendly relationship with President Obama. I would be more than happy to do so. And facts will tell. But anyway, I think we had a good start.

President Obama. Absolutely. We've had a very good start. What I expect from the Prime Minister is an honest, frank sharing of views and a recognition that the United States and Italy share common values, common interests. Our economies have very strong commercial ties. And if we're acting on those mutual interests, then I have no doubt that we'll continue to see strong cooperation.

As I said before, Prime Minister Berlusconi's assistance on our efforts to close Guantanamo is very important to us. I have to say, by the way, that Bermuda has done us a great service as well, on that front, and I'm grateful to them.

When it comes to Afghanistan and Pakistan, we are part of the same coalition that wants to make sure that the Afghan Government is able and strong to sustain development for the Afghan people, but also to make sure that they're not serving as a safe haven for extremists. When it comes to the world economy, I think all of us have an interest in improving the kinds of financial regulations that will prevent the kinds of crises that we saw happening most recently.

So across the board, I think we have a host of common interests. In addition to liking Prime Minister Berlusconi personally, our peoples like each other and recognize that we have shared interests. And that, I think, will make the path for continued cooperation that much easier.

[*At this point, an interpreter translated President Obama's remarks into Italian.*]

President Obama. I must say, my answers sound very elegant in Italian. [*Laughter*]

Steve Collinson [Agence France-Presse].

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Of the conditions that Prime Minister Netanyahu laid out yesterday for a Palestinian state, the basis for negotiation, do you think they will likely prove a stumbling block, given the broadly negative reaction from the Arab States and the Palestinians?

President Obama. Well, first of all, I think it's important not to immediately assess the situation based on commentary the day after a speech. I think any time an Israeli Prime Minister makes a statement, the immediate reaction tends to be negative on one side. If the other side is making a statement, oftentimes the reaction is negative in Israel.

Overall, I thought that there was positive movement in the Prime Minister's speech. He acknowledged the need for two states. There were a lot of conditions, and obviously, working through the conditions on Israel's side for security, as well as the Palestinian side for sovereignty and territorial integrity and the capacity to have a functioning, prosperous state, that's exactly what negotiations are supposed to be about. But what we're seeing is at least the possibility that we can restart serious talks.

Now, I've been very clear that, from the United States perspective, Israel's security is nonnegotiable. We will stand behind their defense. I've also made very clear that both sides are going to have to move in some politically difficult ways in order to achieve what is going to be in the long-term interests of the Israelis and the Palestinians and the international community.

On the Israeli side, that means a cessation of settlements. And there is a tendency to try to parse exactly what this means, but I think the parties on the ground understand that if you have a continuation of settlements that, in past agreements, have been categorized as illegal, that that's going to be an impediment to progress. On the Palestinian side, whether it's the Palestinian Authority or other groups like Hamas that claim to speak for the Palestinians, a recognition of the Quartet principles, ensuring that there's a recognition of Israel's right to exist, making sure that past agreements are abided to, that there's an end to incitement against Israel and an end to violence against Israel, those are necessary pillars of any serious agreement that's to be reached.

And those pillars have to be supported by the Arab States, because Israel's security concerns extend beyond simply the Palestinian Territories; they extend to concerns that they have in a whole host of neighbors where there's

perceived and often real hostility towards Israel's security. So I'm glad that Prime Minister Netanyahu made the speech. The United States will continue to try to be as honest as possible to all sides in this dispute to indicate the degree to which it's in everybody's interests to move in a new direction. And I think it can be accomplished, but it's going to require a lot of work and a partnership with key countries like Italy in order to help the parties come together and recognize their own interests.

Prime Minister Berlusconi. Messaggero.

Global Economic Stabilization

Q. You discussed during the meeting the crisis, the economic crisis, you're going to discuss at the G–8. The package of measures you are discussing right now, can this be a kind of basis for the next meetings, G–8 and G–20?

President Obama. Well, our respective finance ministers, not just Italy's and the United States, but all the G–8 members', have been meeting diligently. They've put forward a framework that will be discussed and, hopefully, ratified at the G–8. That will provide a broad set of principles.

Now, the United States is putting forward some very specific regulatory reforms that are going to make sure that we don't find ourselves in this position again, that improves oversight, ensures that banks aren't taking risks with highly leveraged money that can result in systemic collapse, that consumers and investors are protected more effectively.

So we're going to have a lot of work to do. It's going to be a big, complex piece of legislation. Different countries are going to have different needs. Prime Minister Berlusconi was indicating to me that the banking system in Italy has not been under the same kinds of pressures as the banking system in the United States and some of other European countries.

But I think the general principle that we're going to have improved oversight, better practices, and that there's some coordination and information sharing between countries on issues like tax havens, for example, so that you don't have global capital avoiding more stringent rules by going to countries with weaker rules, I think that's going to be something that all G–8 members affirm. And we very much appreciate Prime Minister Berlusconi's leadership on this issue.

Prime Minister Berlusconi. I would like to add to this that our ministers of finance have been working on all of these issues and packages. In particular they paid attention, for instance, to corporate governance and rules for transparency and a regulation of the financial sectors, accounting rules, and as the President Obama has also mentioned, also the issue of tax havens, to try and prevent those situations from happening again. And the idea is to work out a set of rules and regulations which can prevent situations and conditions like the ones we've experienced which have led—from happening, experience that is to—which led first to the financial crisis and then to the economic crisis that we are experiencing right now.

President Obama. Thank you. *Grazie.*

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:48 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to White House Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel; Minister of Economy and Finance Giulio Tremonti of Italy; and Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner. Prime Minister Berlusconi referred to Pascal Lamy, Director-General, World Trade Organization; and Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya, in his capacity as President of the African Union. Prime Minister Berlusconi and some reporters spoke in Italian, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on the Global Deployments of United States Combat-Equipped Armed Forces

June 15, 2009

Dear Madam Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

I am providing this supplemental consolidated report, prepared by my Administration and consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93–148), as part of my efforts to keep the Congress informed about global deployments of U.S. Armed Forces equipped for combat. This supplemental report covers ongoing U.S. contingency operations overseas.

Since October 7, 2001, the United States has conducted combat operations in Afghanistan against al-Qa'ida terrorists and their Taliban supporters, and has deployed various combat-equipped forces to a number of locations in the Central, Pacific, European, Southern, and Africa Command areas of operation in support of those and other overseas operations. These operations and deployments remain ongoing and were previously reported consistent with Public Law 107–40 and the War Powers Resolution.

In response to the terrorist threat, I will direct additional measures, as necessary, in the exercise of the right of the United States to self-defense and to protect U.S. citizens and interests. Such measures may include short-notice deployments of special operations and other forces for sensitive operations in various locations throughout the world. It is not possible to know at this time the precise scope or the duration of the deployments of U.S. Armed Forces necessary to counter the terrorist threat to the United States.

United States Armed Forces, with the assistance of numerous international partners, continue to conduct the U.S. campaign to pursue al-Qa'ida terrorists and to eliminate support to al-Qa'ida. These operations have been successful in seriously degrading al-Qa'ida's capabilities. United States Armed Forces, with the assistance of numerous international partners, brought an end to the Taliban regime. Our forces are actively pursuing and engaging remaining al-Qa'ida and Taliban fighters in Afghanistan. The total number of U.S. forces in Afghanistan is approximately 58,000, of which approximately 20,000 are assigned to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. The U.N. Security Council authorized ISAF in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1386 of December 20, 2001, and has reaffirmed its authorization since that time, most recently for a 12-month period from October 13, 2008, in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1833 of September 22, 2008. The mission of ISAF, under NATO command, is to assist the Government of Afghanistan in creating a safe and secure environment that allows for continued reconstruction and the exercise and extension of Afghan authority. Presently, 40 nations contribute to ISAF, including all 28 NATO Allies.

The United States continues to detain several hundred al-Qa'ida and Taliban fighters who are believed to pose a continuing threat to the United States and its interests. The combat-equipped forces deployed since January 2002 to Naval Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in the U.S. Southern Command area of operations, continue to conduct secure detention operations for those detained at Guantanamo Bay under Public Law 107–40 and consistent with the law of war.

The U.N. Security Council authorized a Multinational Force (MNF) in Iraq, under unified command, in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1511 of October 16, 2003, and reaffirmed its authorization in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1546 of June 8, 2004, U.N. Security Council Resolution 1637 of November 8, 2005, U.N. Security Council Resolution 1723 of November 28, 2006, and U.N. Security Council Resolution 1790 of December 18, 2007; the authorization was not renewed in 2009. Since the expiration of the authorization and mandate for the MNF in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1790 on December 31, 2008, U.S. forces have continued operations to support Iraq in its efforts to maintain security and stability in Iraq pursuant to the bilateral Agreement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq on the Withdrawal of United States Forces from Iraq and the Organization of Their Activities during

Their Temporary Presence in Iraq, which entered into force on January 1, 2009. These contributions have included, but have not been limited to, assisting in building the capability of the Iraqi security forces, supporting the development of Iraq's political institutions, improving local governance, enhancing ministerial capacity, and providing critical humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to the Iraqis. The U.S. contribution of forces to the Iraq mission fluctuates over time, depending on the conditions in theater as determined by the commanders on the ground; the present U.S. contribution is approximately 138,000 U.S. military personnel.

In furtherance of U.S. efforts against terrorists who pose a continuing and imminent threat to the United States, its friends, its allies, and our forces abroad, the United States continues to work with partners around the globe. These efforts include the deployment of U.S. combat-equipped forces to assist in enhancing the counterterrorism capabilities of our friends and allies. United States combat-equipped forces continue to be located in the Horn of Africa region.

In addition, the United States continues to conduct maritime interception operations on the high seas in the areas of responsibility of all of the geographic combatant commands. These maritime operations are aimed at stopping the movement, arming, and financing of international terrorists.

As noted in previous reports regarding U.S. contributions in support of peacekeeping efforts in Kosovo, the U.N. Security Council authorized Member States to establish a NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR) in U.N. Security Council Resolution 1244 of June 10, 1999. The original mission of KFOR was to monitor, verify, and, when necessary, enforce compliance with the Military Technical Agreement between NATO and Serbia (formerly the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), while maintaining a safe and secure environment. Today, KFOR deters renewed hostilities and, with local authorities and international police, contributes to the maintenance of a safe and secure environment that facilitates the work of the European Union (EU)-led International Civilian Office and the EU Rule of Law Mission (EULEX).

Currently, 25 NATO nations contribute to KFOR. Eight non-NATO countries also participate by providing military and other support personnel. The U.S. contribution to KFOR is about 1,400 U.S. military personnel, or approximately 10 percent of the total strength of approximately 13,700 personnel.

The U.S. forces participating in KFOR have been assigned to the eastern region of Kosovo but also have operated in other areas of the country based on mission requirements. For U.S. KFOR forces, as for KFOR generally, helping to maintain a safe and secure environment and freedom of movement remain the principal military tasks. The KFOR operates under NATO command and control and rules of engagement, and coordinates with and supports EULEX, within its means and capabilities. The KFOR provides a security presence in towns, villages, and the countryside, and organizes checkpoints and patrols in key areas to provide security, to protect all segments of Kosovo's population, and to help instill a feeling of confidence across all ethnic communities throughout Kosovo.

NATO periodically conducts formal reviews of KFOR's mission. These reviews provide a basis for assessing current force levels, future requirements, and recommendations for adjustments to KFOR's force structure and eventual withdrawal. NATO adopted the Joint Operations Area plan to regionalize and rationalize its force structure in the Balkans.

The Kosovo Police (KP) has primary responsibility for public safety and policing throughout Kosovo. The EULEX monitors, mentors, and advises the KP and possesses limited executive authority. The KP provides the first line of riot response, to be followed by EULEX's specialized anti-riot police (Formed Police Units or FPUs). The KFOR also offers as-needed security assistance in response to civil unrest. The KFOR augments security in particularly sensitive areas or in response to particular threats as events on the ground dictate.

In January 2009, the Government of Kosovo established the Kosovo Security Force (KSF)

and began the process of dissolving the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC). The KSF is a lightly armed, civilian-led security force that provides crisis response, explosive ordnance disposal, and civil protection. The newly formed Ministry for the Kosovo Security Force provides civilian oversight and control for the KSF. The KFOR provides technical and policy guidance to the KSF and assists with recruiting for new members, chairing selection boards that identify former KPC members to join the KSF, supervising NATO-standard training programs for new recruits, and coordinating KSF equipment purchases and donations.

I have directed the participation of U.S. Armed Forces in all of these operations pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct the foreign relations of the United States and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive. Officials of my Administration and I communicate regularly with the leadership and other Members of Congress with regard to these deployments, and we will continue to do so.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Robert C. Byrd, President pro tempore of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 16.

The President's News Conference With President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea

June 16, 2009

President Obama. Good morning, everybody. President Lee, on behalf of the American people, it is my pleasure to welcome you to Washington. *Hwan yong hamnida*.

President Lee. Thank you.

President Obama. I'm looking forward to continuing our conversation over lunch, and I know that First Lady Michelle Obama is very much delighted to host your wife today as well.

The Republic of Korea is one of America's closest allies. Our friendship has been forged through a history of shared sacrifice, and it is anchored in our shared democratic values. And, Mr. President, I'm pleased that the friendship between our countries has only grown stronger under your leadership.

We meet at a time of great challenges. On the Korean Peninsula, North Korea has abandoned its own commitments and violated international law. Its nuclear and ballistic missile programs pose a grave threat to peace and security of Asia and to the world. In the face of these threats and provocations, the people of the Republic of Korea have shown a steadiness and a resolve that has earned the respect of the United States and of the world.

Today President Lee and I reiterated our shared commitment to the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. We have reaffirmed the endurance of our alliance and America's commitment to the defense of the Republic of Korea. And we discussed the measures that we are taking with our partners in the region, including Russia, China, and Japan, to make it clear to North Korea that it will not find security or respect through threats and illegal weapons.

That united international front has been on full display since North Korea's ballistic missile test in April and was further galvanized by its recent nuclear test. On Friday the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution that called for strong steps to block North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs. Now we must pursue a sustained and robust effort to implement this resolution together with our international partners. And in addition to the Korean Peninsula, we are committed to a global effort to pursue the goal of a world without nuclear weapons, an effort that I will be discussing later this summer in Moscow and at the G–8.

So I want to be clear that there is another path available to North Korea, a path that leads to peace and economic opportunity for the people of North Korea, including full integration

into the community of nations. That destination can only be reached through peaceful negotiations that achieve the full and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. That is the opportunity that exists for North Korea, and President Lee and I join with the international community in urging the North Koreans to take it.

President Lee and I also discussed our efforts to confront the global economic crisis. Earlier this year in London, we agreed upon bold and sustained action to jump-start growth and to prevent a crisis like this from never happening again. Today we reaffirmed this effort as well as our commitment to resist protectionism and to continue our close collaboration in the run-up to the next meeting of the G–20 in Pittsburgh.

In addition to taking immediate action to put our economies on the path to recovery, both President Lee and I want to build a foundation for new prosperity. In particular, we believe that the United States and the Republic of Korea can partner together on behalf of clean energy and sustainable growth, so that we're working together to build the jobs and the industries of the future.

Finally, I think it's important to note that we are releasing a joint statement laying out a shared vision for our alliance in the 21st century. Our friendship has often, understandably, focused on security issues, particularly in Northeast Asia. But we're also committed to a sustained strategic partnership with the Republic of Korea on the full range of global challenges that we're facing, from economic development to our support for democracy and human rights, for—from nonproliferation to counterterrorism and peacekeeping.

The challenges of our young century can only be met through partnership, and the United States is honored to partner with the Korean people. We will be resolute in the defense of our security. We will collaborate on behalf of innovation and opportunity. And we will strengthen and deepen the friendship among our people. That's our commitment as friends and allies, and I look forward to working with President Lee on behalf of a more peaceful and prosperous future in Asia and around the world.

Thank you so much.

President Lee. Thank you.

Today President Obama and I—and the people of the United States have extended to us their warmest welcome, and I would like to thank them sincerely. President Obama and I met last time in April in London, during the sidelines of the G–20, and today is our second meeting.

During my talks with President Obama, we had a very substantive talks. We, of course, talked about the security situation surrounding the Korean Peninsula, but also about the future of our Korea-U.S. alliance and our joint vision for this future. And of course, we have agreed on the joint vision for the future, and I think this is a testament of our common commitment, because for the last 60 years since the Korean war, our relationship has been one of a strong security alliance and a partnership. Now, the future in this new era is about not only strengthening our mutual partnership, but also working together side by side to tackle issues of global concern.

And on that regard, I am extremely pleased to note that today is a meaningful and very significant day for Korea-U.S. alliance, of really upgrading to a new plateau our relationship and partnership. I take this opportunity to sincerely thank the great people of America for their selfless sacrifice in defending my country and its people, and on behalf of the Korean people, thank you.

As reiterated by President Obama, we agreed that under no circumstance are we going to allow North Korea to possess nuclear weapons. We also agreed to robustly implement U.N. Security Council Resolution 1874, and of course, all parties will faithfully take part in implementing this resolution.

Also, we agreed that based on the firm cooperation between the U.S. and Korea, the five countries taking part in the six-party talks will discuss new measures and policies that will effectively persuade North Korea to irrevocably dismantle all their nuclear weapons programs. President Obama reaffirmed this firm commitment toward

ensuring the security of South Korea through extended deterrence, which includes the nuclear umbrella, and this has given the South Korean people a greater sense of security.

President Obama and I also talked about the KORUS FTA and welcomed the initiation of working-level consultations to make progress on the issues surrounding the KORUS FTA and agreed to make joint efforts to chart our way forward on the agreement.

I also took time to invite President Obama to visit South Korea. And I also conveyed to him our warmest gratitude on behalf of the Korean people to the people of America. Once again, I'm very pleased to note that he and I engaged in very constructive discussions, and I'm very pleased with the results.

Once again, I thank President Obama and the people of the United States. Thank you.

President Obama. Okay, we've got time for a couple of questions. Scott Wilson at the Post [Washington Post].

North Korea

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. North Korea has said it should be recognized as a nuclear power, and it has set that as a precondition for normal relations with the United States and with other nations. Given its belligerent response to the recent sanctions and the indigenous nature of its nuclear program, does your administration—is it coming to the realization that recognizing North Korea as a country that's going to have nuclear weapons for a long time is one way to go? And if so, what influences does that have on your policy options?

And to President Lee, do you believe your country is currently under threat of attack from the North given its recent rhetoric? Thank you.

President Obama. We have continually insisted that North Korea denuclearize. The Republic of Korea agrees with this position. Other allies, like Japan, agree with this position. China and Russia agree with this position. The United Nations Security Council reflects this view. We will pursue denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula vigorously.

So we have not come to a conclusion that North Korea will or should be a nuclear power. Given their past behavior, given the belligerent manner in which they are constantly threatening their neighbors, I don't think there's any question that that would be a destabilizing situation that would be a profound threat to not only the United States security, but to world security.

North Korea also has a track record of proliferation that makes it unacceptable for them to be accepted as a nuclear power. They have not shown in the past any restraint in terms of exporting weapons to not only state actors, but also non-state actors.

So what we've said is, is that there is a path for North Korea to take in which they are joining the world community, becoming integrated into the world economy, able to feed their own people, able to provide prosperity for their people. I know that the Republic of Korea welcomes that kind of neighbor. And obviously, there's a strong historic bond between the Korean peoples that should be affirmed. But in order to take that path, North Korea has to make a decision and understand that prestige and security and prosperity are not going to come through the path of threatening neighbors and engaging in violations of international law.

President Lee. Right now, North Korea, there was a question about whether we fear an imminent attack by North Korea. Sixty years ago, North Korea invaded South Korea and they began a war. After that, there were numerous amount of threats leveled against South Korea ever since. However, South Korea, we have always been very firm in our response and always prepared. And of course, this is based firmly on the firm cooperation and partnership and alliance between Korea and the United States. And North Koreans, when they look at the firm partnership and alliance that we have between our two countries, they will think twice about taking any measures that they will regret.

And again, this very firm alliance that we have between the United States and Korea is going to prevent anything from happening. And of course, North Korea may have—may wish to do so, but of course, they will not be able to do so.

Six-Party Talks

Q. [*Inaudible*]—from Korea's Yonhap News Agency. A question going out to President Lee. North Korea recently said that they will not return to the six-party talks. They have denounced the U.N. Security Council resolution and said they will not give up their nuclear weapons program. Can you, sir, talk about if—whether you talked about how you plan to proceed forward, and did you talk about this with President Obama?

And of course, their continuing threat emanating from North Korea—a South Korean worker has been and is still detained by the North Koreans. What are your thoughts about the maintenance of the Kaesong industrial complex, and did you talk about—President Obama—or were there any concerns from the Americans about the Kaesong industrial complex?

President Lee. North Korea has been resisting, and they've reacted aggressively to the new U.N. Security Council resolution, which is quite expected. And of course, the North Koreans may react by firing another round of missiles or taking actions. We can also expect that from them as well. However, North Koreans must understand that they will not be able to gain compensation by provoking a crisis. This has been a pattern in the past, but this will no longer be. The firm U.S.-Korea cooperation and alliance will not allow that. And the recent Security Council resolution is not simply about words; it is about taking follow-up action and vigorously implementing the U.N. Security Council resolution. And we'll make sure that we fully implement the U.N. Security Council resolution.

Like I said, the North Koreans must understand that their past behavior will not stand. And of course, not only the U.S.-Korea close partnership, but Japan, China, and the rest of the international community will take part in this effort. And now the North Koreans will come to understand that this is different, that they will not be able to repeat the past or their past tactics and strategies. I urge the North Koreans to fully give up their nuclear weapons programs and ambitions and to become a responsible member of the international community.

With regards to the Kaesong industrial complex, the North Korean authorities are demanding unacceptable demands, and we will not accept such demands being laid out by the North Koreans. Of course, the South Korean Government is very much for maintaining the Kaesong industrial complex because the Kaesong industrial complex is a channel of dialog between the two Koreas. And also, another fact that we must not overlook is the fact that there are 40,000 North Korean workers currently working in Kaesong industrial complex. If the Kaesong industrial complex were to close, these 40,000 North Korean workers will lose their jobs.

And therefore, I ask that—I urge the North Koreans not to make any unacceptable demands, because we cannot really know what will happen if they continue on this path. And also the North Koreans have been detaining a South Korean worker. They haven't been giving us any explanation, and also we know that there are two American journalists being currently held by the North Koreans. I urge the North Koreans to release not only the two American journalists, but also the South Korean worker, without any conditions, to release them as soon as possible. The international community is asking the North Koreans to take that path. And once again, I urge in the strongest terms that they release these two American journalists, as well as the Korean worker being held.

United Nations Sanctions Against North Korea

President Obama. Chip [Chip Reid, CBS News].

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Since it's such a pleasant day, I was hoping you'd consent to let me ask two questions. The first one, on reports that there's a new policy on intercepting North Korean ships at sea, if you could say anything about that. And are you concerned that that could provoke North Korea to new levels, higher levels of hostility?

President Obama. Well, this is not simply a U.S. policy; this is a international policy. This was part of what the Security Council

resolution calls for, is the interdiction of arms shipments. How that's going to be implemented, how we approach cooperation between various countries to enforce this, is something that the United States, South Korea, China, Russia, all relevant actors—Japan—all relevant actors will be discussing in the months to come.

But I want to emphasize something that President Lee said. There's been a pattern in the past where North Korea behaves in a belligerent fashion, and if it waits long enough, is then rewarded with foodstuffs and fuel and concessionary loans and a whole range of benefits. And I think that's the pattern that they've come to expect.

The message we're sending—and when I say "we," not simply the United States and the Republic of Korea, but I think the international community—is we are going to break that pattern. We are more than willing to engage in negotiations to get North Korea on a path of peaceful coexistence with its neighbors, and we want to encourage their prosperity. But belligerent, provocative behavior that threatens neighbors will be met with significant, serious enforcement of sanctions that are in place.

And I think it may not have been fully acknowledged the degree to which we have seen much tougher sanctions voted out unanimously, in fairly rapid order, over the last several weeks. And I expect that that signals the degree to which we're serious about enforcement.

U.S. Financial Regulatory System Oversight

Q. And secondly, Mr. President, tomorrow you're going to be rolling out your financial regulation plan. And I know you're not going to want to step all over what you're going to say tomorrow. However, we do know from your advisers that you plan to recommend the creation of a new agency, the Consumer Financial Protection Agency. So you'll have the CFPA, you've got the Fed, the SEC, the FDIC, and on and on; it's like alphabet soup. Why did you decide not to consolidate agencies, but instead to add to the agencies? Isn't too many agencies part of the problem?

President Obama. You're right; I don't want to step on my announcement tomorrow. So let me just speak in broad principles, and then tomorrow you'll have a chance to ask questions of the administration about exactly what we've proposed.

The broad principle is that a lack of oversight, a series of regulatory gaps allowed financial institutions—not just banks, but non-bank institutions—to engage in wild risk-taking that didn't simply imperil those institutions, but imperiled the United States economy and had a profound recessionary effect on the world economy. We have to make sure that we've got a updated regulatory system—that hasn't been significantly changed since the 1930s—to deal with enormous global capital flows and a range of new instruments and risk-taking that has been very dangerous for the American people.

We are going to put forward a very strong set of regulatory measures that we think can prevent this kind of crisis from happening again. We expect that Congress will work swiftly to get these laws in place. I want to sign them, and we want to get them up and running.

And I think when you see the overall approach that we're taking, you'll see that we have not, in fact, added a whole host of regulatory agencies. In fact, there's going to be streamlining, consolidation, and additional overlap so that you don't find people falling through the gaps, whether it's on the consumer protection side, the investor protection side, the systemic risk that we need to make sure is avoided, on all those issues that's going to be a much more effectively integrated system than previously.

But it's going to be, as usual, a heavy lift, because there are going to be people who want to keep on taking these risks, counting on U.S. taxpayers to bail them out if their bets go bad. And you'll hear a lot of chatter about, "we don't need more regulation" and "government needs to get off our backs." There's a short memory, unfortunately, and I think that's what some of the special interests and lobbyists are going to be counting on, that somehow we've forgotten the disaster that arose out of their reckless behavior. And I'm going to keep on reminding them so we make sure that we get something in place that prevents this kind of situation from happening again.

South Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

Q. Kim—[*inaudible*]—from Korea's YTN. A question going out to President Obama. You spoke about how the two leaders, you agreed to move forward the KORUS FTA. However, in certain segments of—here in the United States, there are calls that are resistant to the KORUS FTA because of automobile issues and others. And of course, there are calls for proponents of the KORUS FTA. When do you expect to submit the KORUS FTA? Are you willing to submit it sometime this year?

President Obama. One of the things that President Lee and I discussed in London, not just bilaterally, but with other world leaders, is the importance at a time when the global economy has been devastated by recession that we do not resort to protectionist measures, that we continue to affirm the importance of free trade between countries in order to—everyone's prosperity.

Now, as you know, trade negotiations are always difficult between any country because, although over time trade can increase prosperity for all, in the short term, various industries want to know how is this going to affect them.

In Korea there are issues of beef imports. In the United States there are questions about whether there's sufficient reciprocity with respect to cars. These are all understandable, legitimate issues for negotiation. What I've done is to affirm to President Lee that we want to work constructively with the Republic of Korea in a systematic way to clear some of these barriers that are preventing free trade from occurring between our two countries.

Once we have resolved some of the substantive issues, then there's going to be the issue of political timing and when that should be presented to Congress. But I don't want to put the cart before the horse—I don't know if that's an expression in Korean. But we want to make sure that we have the—a agreement that I feel confident is good for the American people, that President Lee feels confident is good for the Korean people, before we start trying to time when we would present it. But I am committed to moving forward on a path that will increase commercial ties that are already very strong between our two countries.

Okay. Thank you very much, everybody.

Election in Iran

Q. Iran? On Iran?

President Obama. It was only, let's see, I think 7 hours ago or 8 hours ago when I—I have said before that I have deep concerns about the election. And I think that the world has deep concerns about the election. You've seen in Iran some initial reaction from the Supreme Leader that indicates he understands the Iranian people have deep concerns about the election.

Now, it's not productive, given the history of U.S.-Iranian relations, to be seen as meddling—the U.S. President meddling in Iranian elections. What I will repeat, and what I said yesterday, is that when I see violence directed at peaceful protestors, when I see peaceful dissent being suppressed, wherever that takes place, it is of concern to me, and it's of concern to the American people. That is not how governments should interact with their people.

And my hope is, is that the Iranian people will make the right steps in order for them to be able to express their voices, to express their aspirations. I do believe that something has happened in Iran where there is a questioning of the kinds of antagonistic postures towards the international community that have taken place in the past, and that there are people who want to see greater openness and greater debate and want to see greater democracy. How that plays out over the next several days and several weeks is something, ultimately, for the Iranian people to decide. But I stand strongly with the universal principle that people's voices should be heard and not suppressed.

Okay? All right. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:40 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Kim Yoon-ok, wife of President Lee; and Supreme Leader Ali Hoseini-Khamenei of Iran. President Lee referred to Yu Song-jin, a

South Korean worker at the Kaesong industrial complex in North Korea, who has been held by North Korean authorities since March 30; and American journalists Euna Lee and Laura Ling, who have been held by North Korean authorities since March 17. President Lee and some reporters spoke in Korean, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Joint Statement by the United States of America and the Republic of Korea on the Alliance Between the United States of America and the Republic of Korea
June 16, 2009

The United States of America and the Republic of Korea are building an Alliance to ensure a peaceful, secure and prosperous future for the Korean Peninsula, the Asia-Pacific region, and the world.

Our open societies, our commitment to free democracy and a market economy, and our sustained partnership provide a foundation for the enduring friendship, shared values, and mutual respect that tightly bind the American and Korean peoples.

The bonds that underpin our Alliance and our partnership are strengthened and enriched by the close relationships among our citizens. We pledge to continue programs and efforts to build even closer ties between our societies, including cooperation among business, civic, cultural, academic, and other institutions.

The United States-Republic of Korea Mutual Defense Treaty remains the cornerstone of the U.S.-ROK security relationship, which has guaranteed peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia for over fifty years. Over that time, our security Alliance has strengthened and our partnership has widened to encompass political, economic, social and cultural cooperation. Together, on this solid foundation, we will build a comprehensive strategic alliance of bilateral, regional and global scope, based on common values and mutual trust. Together, we will work shoulder-to-shoulder to tackle challenges facing both our nations on behalf of the next generation.

The Alliance is adapting to changes in the 21st Century security environment. We will maintain a robust defense posture, backed by allied capabilities which support both nations' security interests. The continuing commitment of extended deterrence, including the U.S. nuclear umbrella, reinforces this assurance. In advancing the bilateral plan for restructuring the Alliance, the Republic of Korea will take the lead role in the combined defense of Korea, supported by an enduring and capable U.S. military force presence on the Korean Peninsula, in the region, and beyond.

We will continue to deepen our strong bilateral economic, trade and investment relations. We recognize that the Korea-U.S. (KORUS) Free Trade Agreement could further strengthen these ties and we are committed to working together to chart a way forward. We aim to make low-carbon green growth into a new engine for sustainable economic prosperity and will closely cooperate in this regard. We will strengthen civil space cooperation, and work closely together on clean energy research and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Through our Alliance we aim to build a better future for all people on the Korean Peninsula, establishing a durable peace on the Peninsula and leading to peaceful reunification on the principles of free democracy and a market economy. We will work together to achieve the complete and verifiable elimination of North Korea's nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs, as well as ballistic missile programs, and to promote respect for the fundamental human rights of the North Korean people.

In the Asia-Pacific region we will work jointly with regional institutions and partners to foster prosperity, keep the peace, and improve the daily lives of the people of the region. We believe that open societies and open economies create prosperity and support human dignity, and our nations and civic organizations will promote human rights, democracy, free markets, and trade and investment liberalization in the region. To enhance security in the Asia-Pacific, our governments will advocate

for, and take part in, effective cooperative regional efforts to promote mutual understanding, confidence and transparency regarding security issues among the nations of the region.

Our governments and our citizens will work closely to address the global challenges of terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, piracy, organized crime and narcotics, climate change, poverty, infringement on human rights, energy security, and epidemic disease. The Alliance will enhance coordination on peacekeeping, post-conflict stabilization and development assistance, as is being undertaken in Iraq and Afghanistan. We will also strengthen coordination in multilateral mechanisms aimed at global economic recovery such as the G20.

The United States of America and the Republic of Korea will work to achieve our common Alliance goals through strategic cooperation at every level. Proven bilateral mechanisms such as the Security Consultative Meeting and the Strategic Consultations for Allied Partnership will remain central to realizing this shared vision for the Alliance.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Statement on the Start of Afghanistan's Election Season
June 16, 2009

I congratulate the Afghan people on the start of your official election campaign period. On August 20 this year, the people of Afghanistan will choose a President to lead your nation and also elect Provincial councils to represent you locally.

The successful Presidential candidate will have a full agenda and high expectations. Afghan institutions must better serve the people. There must be full accountability and transparency, so that Afghans can see where their money is spent. Fighters who are ready to lay down their arms and embrace peace must be reintegrated, and Afghanistan needs to work with all her neighbours to promote security and opportunity in the region. In all of these efforts, Afghanistan's next President will have a partner in the United States.

Each nation gives life to democracy in its own way, grounded in the traditions of its own people. The United States does not support or oppose any particular Presidential or Provincial council candidate. Instead, we support the right of the people of Afghanistan to choose their own leaders. That is why we are working with Afghan electoral authorities and the United Nations to help Afghans ensure a credible, secure, and inclusive election process in which all candidates have fair access to media, can freely travel and campaign, and are comfortable with the integrity of the ballots cast on election day.

The United States seeks an enduring partnership with the Afghan people, not with any particular Afghan leader. That partnership will be dedicated to enabling the newly elected President and other officials to deliver governance, security, justice, and economic opportunity to all Afghans. That is the future that the Afghan people deserve, and that is the future that we will seek with the successful candidates and the people who elect them.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Protocol Amending the New Zealand-United States Taxation Convention
June 16, 2009

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit herewith, for the advice and consent of the Senate to its ratification, the Protocol Amending the Convention between the United States of America and New Zealand for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion With Respect to

Taxes on Income, signed on December 1, 2008, at Washington (the "proposed Protocol"). I also transmit for the information of the Senate the report of the Department of State, which includes an Overview of the proposed Protocol.

The proposed Protocol provides for the elimination of withholding taxes on certain cross-border direct dividend payments and on cross-border interest payments to certain financial enterprises. The proposed Protocol reduces the existing Convention's 10-percent limit on withholding taxes on cross-border payments of royalties to 5 percent.

The proposed Protocol contains a comprehensive provision designed to prevent "treaty shopping," which is the inappropriate use of a tax treaty by third-country residents. The proposed Protocol also provides for the exchange of information between tax authorities of the two countries to facilitate the administration of each country's tax laws.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the proposed Protocol and give its advice and consent to ratification.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 16, 2009.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Financial Regulators
June 17, 2009

We got everybody? All right, well, we're looking forward to a constructive conversation with these outstanding regulators and supervisors who have helped us design how we're going to approach a critical problem in our economy. I'll have more to say about it this afternoon, but I want to publicly thank them for their service to the country.

All right, thanks, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:46 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. Audio was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on Financial Regulatory Reform
June 17, 2009

Thank you. Please, everybody, be seated. Thank you very much. Since taking office, my administration has mounted what I think has to be acknowledged as an extraordinary response to a historic economic crisis. But even as we take decisive action to repair the damage to our economy, we're working hard to build a new foundation for sustained economic growth. This will not be easy. We know that this recession is not the result of one failure, but of many. And many of the toughest challenges we face are the product of a cascade of mistakes and missed opportunities which took place over the course of decades.

That's why, as part of this new foundation, we're seeking to build an energy economy that creates new jobs and new businesses to free us from our dependence on foreign oil. We want to foster an education system that instills in each generation the capacity to turn ideas into innovations, and innovations into industries and jobs. And as I discussed on Monday at the American Medical Association, we want to reform our health care system so that we can remain healthy and competitive.

This new foundation also requires strong, vibrant financial markets, operating under transparent, fairly administered rules of the road that protect America's consumers and our economy from the devastating breakdown that we've witnessed in recent years.

It is an indisputable fact that one of the most significant contributors to our economic downturn was a unraveling of major financial institutions and the lack of adequate regulatory structures to prevent abuse and excess. A culture of

irresponsibility took root from Wall Street to Washington to Main Street. And a regulatory regime basically crafted in the wake of a 20th century economic crisis—the Great Depression—was overwhelmed by the speed, scope, and sophistication of a 21st century global economy.

In recent years, financial innovators, seeking an edge in the marketplace, produced a huge variety of new and complex financial instruments. And these products, such as asset-based securities, were designed to spread risk, but unfortunately, ended up concentrating risk. Loans were sold to banks, banks packaged these loans into securities, investors bought these securities often with little insight into the risks to which they were exposed. And it was easy money while it lasted. But these schemes were built on a pile of sand. And as the appetite for these products grew, lenders lowered standards to attract new borrowers. Many Americans bought homes and borrowed money without being adequately informed of the terms, and often without accepting the responsibilities.

Meanwhile, executive compensation unmoored from long-term performance, or even reality, rewarded recklessness rather than responsibility. And this wasn't just the failure of individuals; this was a failure of the entire system. The actions of many firms escaped scrutiny. In some cases, the dealings of these institutions were so complex and opaque that few inside or outside these companies understood what was happening. Where there were gaps in the rules, regulators lacked the authority to take action. Where there were overlaps, regulators lacked accountability for their inaction.

An absence of oversight engendered systematic and systemic abuse. Instead of reducing risk, the markets actually magnified risks that were being taken by ordinary families and large firms alike. There was far too much debt and not nearly enough capital in the system. And a growing economy bred complacency.

Now, we all know the result: the bursting of a debt-based bubble; the failure of several of the world's largest financial institutions; the sudden decline in available credit; the deterioration of the economy; the unprecedented intervention of the Federal Government to stabilize the financial markets and prevent a wider collapse; and most importantly, the terrible pain in the lives of ordinary Americans. And there are retirees who've lost much of their life savings, families devastated by job losses, small businesses forced to shut their doors. Millions of Americans who've worked hard and behaved responsibly have seen their life dreams eroded by the irresponsibility of others and by the failure of their Government to provide adequate oversight. Our entire economy has been undermined by that failure.

So the question is, what do we do now? We did not choose how this crisis began, but we do have a choice in the legacy this crisis leaves behind. So today my administration is proposing a sweeping overhaul of the financial regulatory system, a transformation on a scale not seen since the reforms that followed the Great Depression.

These proposals reflect intensive consultation with leaders of Congress, including those who are here today: Chairman Dodd and Chairman Frank, who, along with Senator Shelby and Representative Bachus, will be meeting with me throughout this process. They met with me earlier this year to jumpstart the discussion of reform. These reforms are also drawing on conversations with regulators, including those I met with this morning, as well as consumer advocates and business leaders, academic experts, and the broader public.

In these efforts, we seek a careful balance. I've always been a strong believer in the power of the free market. It has been and will remain the engine of America's progress, the source of prosperity that's unrivaled in history. I believe that jobs are best created not by government, but by businesses and entrepreneurs who are willing to take a risk on a good idea. I believe that our role is not to disparage wealth, but to expand its reach; not to stifle the market, but to strengthen its ability to unleash the creativity and innovation that still makes this Nation the envy of the world.

So that's our goal: to restore markets in which we reward hard work and responsibility and innovation, not recklessness and greed; in

which honest, vigorous competition is the system—in the system is prized, and those who game the system are thwarted.

With the reforms we're proposing today, we seek to put in place rules that will allow our markets to promote innovation while discouraging abuse. We seek to create a framework in which markets can function freely and fairly, without the fragility in which normal business cycles suddenly bring the risk of financial collapse. We want a system that works for businesses and consumers.

There are those who will say that we do not go far enough, that we should have scrapped the system altogether and started all over again. I think that would be a mistake. Instead, we've crafted reforms to pinpoint the structural weaknesses that allowed for this crisis and to make sure that these problems are dealt with so that we're preventing crises in the future.

And there are also those who say that we are going too far. But the events of the past few years offer ample testimony for the need to make significant changes. The absence of a working regulatory regime over many parts of the financial system, and over the system as a whole, led us to near catastrophe. We shouldn't forget that. We don't want to stifle innovation. But I'm convinced that by setting out clear rules of the road and ensuring transparency and fair dealing, we will actually promote a more vibrant market. This principle is at the heart of the changes we're proposing, so let me list them for you.

First, we're proposing a set of reforms to require regulators to look not only at the safety and soundness of individual institutions but also, for the first time, at the stability of the financial system as a whole.

One of the reasons this crisis could take place is that while many agencies and regulators were responsible for overseeing individual financial firms and their subsidiaries, no one was responsible for protecting the whole system from the kinds of risks that tied these firms to one another. Regulators were charged with seeing the trees, but not the forest. And even then, some firms that posed a so-called systemic risk were not regulated as strongly as others; they behaved like banks but chose to be regulated as insurance companies, or investment firms, or other entities that were under less scrutiny.

As a result, the failure of one firm threatened the viability of many others, and the effect multiplied. There was no system in place that was prepared for this kind of outcome. And more importantly, no one has been charged with preventing it. We were facing one of the largest financial crises in history, and those responsible for oversight were mostly caught off guard and without the authority needed to address the problem.

It's time for that to change. I am proposing that the Federal Reserve be granted new authority, and accountability, for regulating bank holding companies and other large firms that pose a risk to the entire economy in the event of failure. We'll also raise the standard to which these kinds of firms are held. If you can pose a great risk, that means you have a great responsibility. We will require these firms to meet stronger capital and liquidity requirements so that they're more resilient and less likely to fail.

And even as we place the authority to regulate these large firms in the hands of the Federal Reserve, so that lines of responsibility and accountability are clear, we will also create an oversight council to bring together regulators from across markets to coordinate and share information, to identify gaps in regulation, and to tackle issues that don't fit neatly into an organizational chart. We're going to bring everyone together to take a broader view, and a longer view, to solve problems in oversight before they can become crises.

As part of this effort, we're proposing the creation of what's called resolution authority for large and interconnected financial firms so that we're not only putting in place safeguards to prevent the failure of these firms but also a set of orderly procedures that will allow us to protect the economy if such a firm does in fact go underwater.

Think about this: If a bank fails, we have a process through the FDIC that protects depositors and maintains confidence in the banking system. This process was created during the Great Depression when the failure of one bank led to runs on other banks, which in turn threatened wider turmoil. And it works. Yet we don't

have any effective system in place to contain the failure of an AIG, or the largest and most interconnected financial firms in our country.

And that's why, when this crisis began, crucial decisions about what would happen to some of the world's biggest companies—companies employing tens of thousands of people and holding trillions of dollars in assets—took place in emergency meetings in the middle of the night. And that's why we've had to rely on taxpayer dollars. We should not be forced to choose between allowing a company to fall into a rapid and chaotic dissolution, or to support the company with taxpayer money. That's an unacceptable choice. There's too much at stake, and we're going to change it.

Second, we're proposing a new and powerful agency charged with one—just one job: looking out for ordinary consumers. And this is essential, for this crisis was not just the result of decisions made by the mightiest of financial firms; it was also the result of decisions made by ordinary Americans to open credit cards and take out home loans and take on other financial obligations. We know that there were many who took out loans they knew they couldn't afford, but there were also millions of Americans who signed contracts they didn't always understand offered by lenders who didn't always tell the truth. Even today, folks sign up for mortgages or student loans or credit cards and face a bewildering array of incomprehensible options. Companies compete not by offering better products, but more complicated ones, with more fine print and more hidden terms.

So this new agency will change that, building on credit card reforms I signed into law a few weeks ago with the help of many of the Members of Congress who are here today. This agency will have the power to set standards so that companies compete by offering innovative products that consumers actually want and actually understand. Consumers will be provided information that is simple, transparent, and accurate. You'll be able to compare products and see what's best for you. The most unfair practices will be banned. Those ridiculous contracts with pages of fine print that no one can figure out—those things will be a thing of the past. And enforcement will be the rule, not the exception.

For example, this agency will be empowered to set new rules for home mortgage lending so that the bad practices that led to the home mortgage crisis will be stamped out. Mortgage brokers will be held to higher standards. Exotic mortgages that hide exploding costs will no longer be the norm. Home mortgage disclosures will be reasonable, clearly written, and concise. And we're going to level the playing field so that nonbanks that offer home loans are held to the same standards as banks that offer similar services, so that lenders aren't competing to lower standards, but rather are competing to meet a higher bar on behalf of consumers.

Now, the mission of this new agency must also be reflected in the work we do throughout the Government. There are other agencies, like the Federal Trade Commission, charged with protecting consumers, and we must ensure that those agencies have the resources and the state-of-the-art tools to stop unfair and deceptive practices as well.

Third, we're proposing a series of changes designed to promote free and fair markets by closing gaps and overlaps in our regulatory system, including gaps that exist not just within but between nations.

We've seen that structural deficiencies allow some companies to shop for the regulator of their choice, and others, like hedge funds, to operate outside of the regulatory system altogether. We've seen the development of financial instruments, like many derivatives, that are so complex as to defy efforts to assess their actual value. And we've seen a system that allowed lenders to profit by providing loans to borrowers who would never repay, because the lender offloaded the loans and the consequences to somebody else.

And that's why, as part of these reforms, we will dismantle the Office of Thrift Supervision and close loopholes that have allowed important institutions to cherry-pick among banking rules. We will offer only one Federal banking charter, regulated by a strengthened Federal supervisor. We'll raise capital requirements for

all depository institutions. Hedge fund advisers will be required to register with the SEC.

We're also proposing comprehensive regulation of credit default swaps and other derivatives that have threatened the entire financial system. And we will require the originator of a loan to retain an economic interest in that loan, so that the lender, and not just the holder of a security, for example, has an interest in ensuring that a loan is actually paid back. By setting commonsense rules, these kinds of financial instruments can play a constructive, rather than destructive role.

Now, over the past two decades, we've seen time and again cycles of precipitous booms and busts. In each case, millions of people have had their lives profoundly disrupted by developments in the financial system, most severely in our recent crisis. These aren't just numbers on a ledger. This is a child's chance to get an education. This is a family's ability to pay their bills or stay in their homes. This is the right of our seniors to retire with dignity and security and respect. These are American dreams, and we should not accept a system that consistently puts them in danger. Financial institutions have an obligation to put—to themselves and to the public to manage risks carefully. And as President, I have a responsibility to ensure that our financial system works for the economy as a whole.

There's always been a tension between those who place their faith in the invisible hand of the marketplace and those who place more trust in the guiding hand of the Government, and that tension isn't a bad thing. It gives rise to healthy debates and creates a dynamism that makes it possible for us to adapt and grow. For we know that markets are not an unalloyed force for either good or for ill. In many ways, our financial system reflects us. In the aggregate of countless independent decisions, we see the potential for creativity, and the potential for abuse. We see the capacity for innovations that make our economy stronger, and for innovations that exploit our economy's weaknesses.

We are called upon to put in place those reforms that allow our best qualities to flourish, while keeping those worst traits in check. We're called upon to recognize that the free market is the most powerful generative force for our prosperity, but it is not a free license to ignore the consequences of our actions.

This is a difficult time for our Nation. But from this period of challenge, we can once again tap those values and ideals that have allowed us to lead the global economy and will allow us to lead once again. That's how we'll help more Americans live their own dreams. That's why these reforms are so important. And I look forward to working with leaders in Congress and all of you to see these proposals put to work so that we can overcome this crisis and build a lasting foundation for prosperity.

Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:53 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Remarks on Signing a Memorandum on Federal Benefits and Non-Discrimination

June 17, 2009

Well, today I'm proud to issue a Presidential memorandum that paves the way for long-overdue progress in our Nation's pursuit of equality. Many of our Government's hard-working and dedicated and patriotic public servants have long been denied basic rights that their colleagues enjoy for one simple reason, the people that they love are of the same sex.

Currently, for example, LGBT Federal employees can't always use sick leave to care for their domestic partners or their partners' children. Their partners aren't covered under long-term care insurance. Partners of American Foreign Service officers abroad aren't treated the same way when it comes to the use of medical facilities or visitation rights in case of an

emergency. And these are just some of the wrongs that we intend to right today.

In consultation with Secretary of State Clinton, as well as OPM Director John Berry, my administration has completed a long and thorough review to identify a number of areas where we can extend Federal benefits to the same-sex partners of Foreign Service and executive branch Government employees.

And I'm requesting that Secretary Clinton and Director Berry do so where possible under existing law, and that the heads of all executive departments and agencies conduct reviews to determine where they may do the same.

Hundreds of Fortune 500 companies already offer such benefits, not only because it's the right thing to do, but because they recognize that it helps them compete for and retain the best possible talent, and we need top talent serving their country right now more than ever.

Now, under current law, we cannot provide same-sex couples with the full range of benefits enjoyed by heterosexual married couples. And that's why I'm proud to announce my support for the domestic partners benefits and obligations act; crucial legislation that will guarantee these rights for all Federal employees.

I want to thank Representative Tammy Baldwin, who is behind me somewhere—there she is right there—for her tireless leadership on this bill and in the broader struggle for equality. I want to thank Senators Joe Lieberman—Joe is here—as well as Susan Collins for championing this bill in the Senate, and Representative Barney Frank for his leadership on this and so many other issues. In fact, this is his second trip to the White House today. [*Laughter*]

It's a day that marks a historic step towards the changes we seek, but I think we all have to acknowledge this is only one step. Among the steps we have not yet taken is to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act. I believe it's discriminatory, I think it interferes with States' rights, and we will work with Congress to overturn it.

We've got more work to do to ensure that Government treats all its citizens equally, to fight injustice and intolerance in all its forms, and to bring about that more perfect union. I'm committed to these efforts, and I pledge to work tirelessly on behalf of these issues in the months and years to come.

Thank you very much everybody, and with that I am going to sign this executive order.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:04 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. The memorandum is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Statement on Signing a Memorandum on Federal Benefits and Non-Discrimination and Support of Domestic Partners Benefits and Obligations Legislation

June 17, 2009

In 2007, Michael Guest, the first openly gay Ambassador confirmed by the United States Senate, resigned from the Foreign Service. He loved his career, but he had to leave it in the end, because he believed that the country he served was failing to implement the principles of equality it espoused abroad. His partner was ineligible for training provided to ambassadorial spouses; he bore the costs of his partner's transportation to his placements abroad; and his partner did not receive the overseas benefits and allowances given to spouses of Ambassadors.

It is too late to prevent Ambassador Guest from having to make the choice he made, but today I am proud to issue a Presidential

memorandum that will go a long way toward achieving equality for many of the hard-working, dedicated, and patriotic LGBT Americans serving in our Federal Government, Americans like Ambassador Guest.

In consultation with Secretary Clinton, who in her role as Secretary of State oversees our Foreign Service employees, and Office of Personnel Management Director John Berry, who oversees human resource management for our civil service employees, my administration has identified a number of areas in which greater equality can be achieved under existing law by extending to the same-sex partners of Federal employees many of the same benefits already available to the spouses of heterosexual Federal employees.

I am therefore requesting the Secretary of State and the Director of the Office of Personnel Management to extend the benefits they have identified to the same-sex partners of Federal employees where doing so can be achieved consistent with Federal law. I am also requesting the heads of all other executive departments and agencies to conduct a review of the benefits they administer to determine which may legally be extended to same-sex partners.

But this Presidential memorandum is just a start. Unfortunately, my administration is not authorized by existing Federal law to provide same-sex couples with the full range of benefits enjoyed by heterosexual married couples. That's why I stand by my long-standing commitment to work with Congress to repeal the so-called Defense of Marriage Act. It's discriminatory, it interferes with States' rights, and it's time we overturned it.

I am also proud to announce my support for an important piece of legislation introduced in both Houses of Congress last month, the domestic partners benefits and obligations act of 2009. This legislation will extend to the same-sex partners of Federal employees the same benefits already enjoyed by the opposite-sex spouses of Federal employees.

The legislation has a number of cosponsors in both Houses of Congress, but among those many sponsors, I want to recognize one in particular, Representative Tammy Baldwin, who has been a real leader on this issue and more broadly on the LGBT struggle for equality. Representative Baldwin, I look forward to working with you to achieve the important objectives set out in this bill as it moves through the legislative process. I also look forward to working with the bill's Senate champions, Senators Lieberman and Collins; I know that they will approach this process with the same spirit of cooperation in pursuit of our shared goals that they bring to all of their work in the Senate.

Extending equal benefits to the same-sex partners of Federal employees is the right thing to do. It is also sound economic policy. Many top employers in the private sector already offer benefits to the same-sex partners of their employees; those companies recognize that offering partner benefits helps them compete for and retain the brightest and most talented employees. The Federal Government is at a disadvantage on that score right now, and change is long overdue.

As Americans, we are all affected when our promises of equality go unfulfilled. Through measures like the Presidential memorandum I am issuing today and the domestic partners benefits and obligations act of 2009, we will advance the principles upon which our Nation was founded and continue to perfect our Union.

NOTE: The statement referred to Alex Nevarez, partner of Michael E. Guest, former U.S. Ambassador to Romania. The memorandum is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Risk of Nuclear Proliferation Created by the Accumulation of Weapons-Usable Fissile Material in the Territory of the Russian Federation
June 18, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the emergency declared in Executive Order 13159 of June 21, 2000, with respect to the risk of nuclear proliferation created by the accumulation of a large volume of weapons-usable fissile material in the territory of the Russian Federation, is to continue beyond June 21, 2009.

It remains a major national security goal of the United States to ensure that fissile material removed from Russian nuclear weapons pursuant to various arms control and disarmament agreements is dedicated to peaceful uses, subject to transparency measures, and protected from diversion to activities of proliferation concern. The accumulation of a large volume of weapons-usable fissile material in the territory of the Russian Federation continues to pose an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For this reason, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to the risk of nuclear proliferation created by the accumulation of a large volume of weapons-usable fissile material in the territory of the Russian Federation and maintain in force these emergency authorities to respond to this threat.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 18, 2009.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 19. The notice of June 18 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at a Fundraiser Event for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee
June 18, 2009

Thank you. Well, it is nice to be among friends. I want to thank Bob Menendez, the DSCC chair. I want to thank Chris Van Hollen, the "D-trip" chair, my great leaders in Congress, Harry Reid and Madam Speaker Nancy Pelosi, for their outstanding leadership. To all my colleagues and former colleagues who I see gathered around, thank you so much for your outstanding work. And also, please give a big round of applause to Diana Krall for the wonderful entertainment.

It's a pleasure to be here, on behalf of the men and women in Congress who have worked tirelessly—and I mean tirelessly—over the last 5 months to put this Nation on a road back to prosperity. I want to especially thank the two leaders, two Americans who have, day in, day out, just been steering this ship, and without their leadership in Congress, we would just not get things done, Nancy and Harry. Every single day they are displaying the skill and tenacity and the fierce urgency of the challenges we face. So please give them another round of applause.

Chris Van Hollen and Bob Menendez, they've got a thankless job, which is to recruit and fundraise and organize so we can expand

our majority in 2010. And they're doing exemplary work, and we're all grateful for them.

Now, we've been called to govern in some extraordinary times. We've been asked to confront challenges of a size and scope that are unmatched in recent history, a set of challenges that very few generations of Americans have ever been asked to confront. We've got two wars, a debilitating recession, a global financial crisis, issues like global climate change that threaten our planet. Meeting these challenges is not easy. If it was easy, it would have already been taken care of—[*laughter*]—and everyone here could kick back and spend more time at home with their families.

But that's not the hand that we've been dealt. We've been called to lead not when it's easy, but when it's hard. That requires tough choices, and it requires doing what's right, even what—even if what's right isn't always necessarily popular. It requires taking on the status quo in Washington. And let's face it, the status quo in Washington favors inertia over action and tinkering over real reform. It requires the courage to look beyond the immediate news cycle, which is very hard to do, and to look beyond the next election to the next generation, to do what we have to do to ensure that the American Dream is there for our children and that the world that they inherit is better than the one that we did.

And that's what so many in Congress have done in these last 5 months, and that's what we're going to have to do in the hard months to come. It's not just a responsibility; I think it's also a privilege. And it's an extraordinary opportunity, for in our hands lies the ability to shape our world for good or for ill. Just think about what we've already achieved together—5 months.

Now, people's memories are short around here. [*Laughter*] Let's just do a little inventory. Not 1 month into this administration, we responded to this recession with the most sweeping economic recovery plan in our Nation's history. The plan has already provided tax relief to 95 percent of hard-working families, the most progressive tax cut in our history. It's saving jobs and creating new ones in construction and clean energy and small businesses across the country. Before the summer's end, we will have created another 600,000 jobs.

Thanks to this Congress, we also passed a budget resolution that will help cut our deficit in half, while laying the building blocks of a new foundation for lasting growth and prosperity, a budget that invests in clean energy and quality schools and reform that will finally bring down our health care costs.

With the help of the Members of Congress, and with the help of everybody in this room, we've lifted the ban on Federal funding for stem cell research. We expanded the Children's Health Insurance Program to cover 11 million additional children in need. We passed a national service bill to create hundreds of thousands of opportunities for people to serve in their communities. We passed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act—the first bill I signed into law—to make sure that women in this country get a fair shake on the workplace.

We've passed a series of reforms that won't just change policies in Washington, it changes the way we do business in Washington. We've brought together auto executives and labor unions and environmental groups, Democrats and Republicans, to set a national fuel efficiency standard for our cars and trucks for the first time in history. We passed bipartisan legislation to help homeowners and crack down on predatory lenders who seek to take advantage of them.

We passed a law that will protect consumers from the unfair rate hikes and abusive fees that are levied by many credit card companies, a law that will eliminate waste in our defense budget and save taxpayers billions of dollars. And after a decade of opposition, we passed legislation that will prevent tobacco companies from preying on our children.

Five months. Every Member of Congress who helped make these reforms possible should feel proud of what we've accomplished. But we shouldn't feel satisfied. We should feel confident in the future, but not content with the present, not when there are workers out there who are still looking for a job and families who are still unable to pay their bills. Not when there are millions of Americans who are trying to figure out whether they can afford health

care and millions more of our children who are being left behind in our education system. We can't be satisfied when our Nation is not leading the world in developing a 21st century energy economy.

We've come a long way, we can see some light on the horizon, but we've got a much longer journey to travel. And this is when it gets hard, ironically, in part because the economy has stabilized somewhat; now suddenly everybody forgets. We introduced this financial regulatory bills; people start to say, "Why do we need all this regulation." I'm sorry, wasn't it just in September that the financial system almost melted down? What are you talking about? [*Laughter*]

But that's the nature of things. This is when the criticism gets louder. This is when the pundits grow impatient. This is when the cynicism mounts. This is when we hear the same voices advocating the same old policies that got us into this mess in the first place. This is when we hear that the change we seek just isn't possible: can't do it; system overload; circuits breaking down. [*Laughter*] Right, George? [*Laughter*] I mean, we've been hearing it—it's so predictable.

So this is exactly the moment we need to fight the hardest. This is the time when we need to band together. This is the time when we have to do what we know is right for the country and deliver the change that we promised to deliver in November.

And that's why all of you are here tonight. That's why you're digging deep again tonight, at a time when it's not easy to dig deep. That's why I know that you're going to keep on making those phone calls and knocking on those doors. And that's why we've got to get to those polls again next November to make sure that we send a Democratic House and a Democratic Senate back to Congress to finish the business of the American people.

And that's why I'm here tonight, because I can't bring about the change that I promised by myself in the Oval Office, or just me and Rahm. [*Laughter*] I mean, Rahm is great, but you know—[*laughter*]—I need a little more help than that. It's not how it works.

I need partners in Congress, leaders who are determined to make a difference for the folks they represent. And right now, more than ever before, we need their help; America needs their help. We need their help to build schools that meet high standards, and close the achievement gap, and prepare our kids for the challenges of the 21st century, where we reward teachers for performance and give them new pathways for advancement. We need their help to reach the goal that I've set for higher education in this country, that by the year 2020, America once again will have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world.

We need their help to pass a comprehensive energy and climate bill that will finally reduce our dangerous dependence on foreign oil and offer new energy incentives to reduce the pollution that threatens our health and our climate, a plan that will create millions of new jobs producing wind turbines and solar panels and biofuels. Because we know that the nation that leads the 21st century in clean energy technology, that's the nation that's going to lead in the global economy. And America can and must be that nation.

We need the leaders of Congress to create new rules of the road for Wall Street to make sure that a crisis like this never happens again. As I said, yesterday I outlined a set of regulatory reforms that will encourage drive and innovation in our markets, but reforms that will also punish shortcuts and abuses. They're reforms that will allow our market to function freely and fairly, but without the risks that brought our financial system to the brink of collapse. I ask Congress to pass these reforms before the year is out. It is something that we have to do and I'm confident we can do.

And right now we need the help of this Congress to finally pass reforms that bring down the crushing cost of health care and give every American an opportunity to get decent health care in this country. I gave a speech about this earlier in the week. When it comes to the cost of health care, the status quo is unsustainable. Inaction is no longer an option. If we do nothing, more families will go bankrupt,

more businesses will shut their doors, more debt will be passed on to our children.

It's time to fix what's broken about our health care system and build on what works. And I've said this before: If you like your doctor, you should be able to keep your health care; if you like your health care plan, you should be able to keep it. But we need a system where every American can finally afford their health care.

And let me be clear: I sincerely hope that there are members of both parties who will participate in reform. No party has a monopoly on the best ideas about how to get this done. I've said that before. But to those who simply criticize without offering new ideas of their own, I have to ask, what's your answer? What's your answer to all those families who now spend more on health care than on housing or on food? What's your answer to those businesses that are choosing between closing their doors and letting their workers go?

What's your answer to the woman I met in Wisconsin who introduced me the other day—has breast cancer that's gone to her bones; got two little kids. She's 36 years old. And she's already got $50,000 worth of debt, and she's spending time worrying about whether she's leaving debt behind to her family that they'll never be able to pay off.

Don't tell me that all you're offering is meager tax cuts to uninsured Americans. Don't present that as a new idea. It's the same idea that's been proposed for the last 8 years. Don't tell me that we're going to tinker around the edges and that nothing is going to change and 46 million people won't have health insurance, and you still have people who do have health insurance with their premiums tripling, doubling over the last 9 years, going up three times faster than wages. That's not acceptable.

If we're all—if all we're doing is subsidizing a health care system that can't contain costs, if all we're doing is putting more money into a system that is not working, that is broken, then we're just throwing good money after bad. That's not reform. We need to permanently bring down costs so we can eventually save more money than we spend. And that's what I want to do.

Now, we've outlined a way to pay for this reform with cuts and savings in our budget. And as we make these and other investments, we have to restore fiscal discipline in Washington so that we don't leave our children and grandchildren with a mountain of debt. And already, my administration has identified more than 100 Government programs that we can reduce or eliminate, saving taxpayers nearly $17 billion next year alone. And we're going to go line by line through the budget, looking for even more places to cut.

We're living through extraordinary times. We didn't ask for the challenges that we face, but we are determined to answer the call to meet them. We're going to cast aside the old arguments and overcome the stubborn divisions and move forward as one people and one nation.

And I know it won't be easy. There are going to be setbacks. There are going to be times where we get weary. It's like running that marathon, and you hit a wall, and you're going to say, "My feet hurt, and my knees are buckling." This is going to take time. But I promise you that I will always tell the American people the truth about the challenges we face and the steps that we're taking, and I will continue to measure my progress by the progress the American people see in their own lives.

And I'm convinced that if we stand together, then I know years from now we will look back on this moment as the time when the American people reclaimed together their future and wrote the next great chapter in American history.

We're doing that because of you, and I'm grateful to you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:06 p.m. at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Rep. Chris Van Hollen, chairman, Democratic Congressional Committee; entertainer Diana Krall; White House Chief of Staff Rahm I. Emanuel; and cancer patient Laura Klitzka and her children Taylor and Logan. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 19.

Remarks at the National Hispanic Prayer Breakfast
June 19, 2009

The President. Thank you. *Buenos dias.*

Audience members. Buenos dias.

The President. It is good to see everybody here. Just a few quick acknowledgments. Our outstanding Secretary of Department of Homeland Security, Janet Napolitano, is here. Please give her a big round of applause; the great Governor of the State of Pennsylvania, Ed Rendell. Two special members of my staff that I want all of you to get to know. First of all, we have a White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, if you haven't already met him, Joshua DuBois is just a wonderful young man. Please give him a big round of applause. He helps to organize a lot of our faith outreach. And our Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, one of my favorite people, Cecilia Munoz, please give her a big round of applause.

I want to thank Reverend Cortes for the wonderful introduction and the wonderful prayer for me and my family. I want to thank Esperanza and all of you who worked so hard to put together the National Hispanic Prayer Breakfast and Conference. And I also want to join you in honoring the work of Adolfo Carrion, Sr., on this Father's Day weekend. On this Father's Day weekend I know that my Director of Urban Affairs, Adolfo's son, is particularly proud of his dad. I also want to thank all of you for the work that you do each and every day. Through your service to your communities, you represent the very best in our country. And I'm honored to join you in prayer this morning.

At a time when there's no shortage of challenges to occupy our time, it's even more important to step back and to give thanks and to seek guidance from each other, but most importantly from God. That's what we've come here to do.

We can begin by giving thanks for the legacy that allows us to come together, for it was the genius of America's Founders to protect the freedom of all religion and those who practice no religion at all. So as we join in prayer, we remember that this is a nation of Christians and Muslims and Jews and Hindus and nonbelievers. It is this freedom that allows faith to flourish within our borders. It is this freedom that makes our Nation stronger.

For those of us who draw on faith as a guiding force in our lives, prayer has many purposes. For many, it's a source of support when times are hard. President Lincoln, who Reverend Cortes mentioned, once said, "I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go." And while the challenges that I've faced pale in comparison to Lincoln's, I know that more than once I've been filled with the same conviction over the last 5 months.

But prayer is more than a last resort. Prayer helps us search for meaning in our own lives, and it helps us find the vision and the strength to see the world that we want to build. And that's what I'd like to talk about for just a few minutes today.

As I look out at this audience, I'm reminded of the power of faith in America; faith in God, and a faith in the promise of this great country. Each of us come from many different places. We trace our roots back to different nations, and we represent a broad spectrum of personal and political beliefs. But all of us pray to God. All of us share a determination to build a better future for our children and for our grandchildren. That must be a starting point for common ground and for the America that we want to build.

Like some of you, I am the son of a parent who came to these shores in search of a better future. And while I may be the first African American President, there is nothing unique or unusual about the opportunities that this country gave to me. Instead, like generations of Americans, I could count on the basic promise that no matter what you look like or where you come from, America will let you go as far as your dreams and your hard work will carry you.

And that promise is at the heart of the American story. It's a story shared by many of you: by clergy and Members of Congress; by

business leaders and community organizers. It's a story of every young child who has the opportunity to go farther in life than their parents were able to go. It's the story of a young girl who could rise from a public housing project to be nominated for the highest court in the land. And I am confident that it's a story that will someday be told by the first Hispanic President of the United States of America.

But we know there is much more work to be done to extend the promise of a better life to all our children and grandchildren. In all that we do, we must be guided by that simple command that binds all great religions together: Love thy neighbor as thyself.

In the 21st century, we've learned that this truth is central not just to our own lives, but to our success as a nation. If our children cannot get the world-class education they need to succeed, then America will not be able to compete with other countries. If our families cannot afford health care, then the costs go up for all of us: individuals, businesses, and government. If folks down the street can't pay their mortgage and folks across town can't find a job, then that pain is going to trickle into other parts of our economy.

And that's why we've come together on behalf of the future that we want to build, one where all of our children go to the best schools, all our people can go to work and make a living, all our families can afford health care, and prosperity is extended to everybody. Together we must build a future where the promise of America is kept for a new generation.

We also know that keeping this promise means upholding America's tradition as a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. Those things aren't contradictory; they're complementary. That's why I'm committed to passing comprehensive immigration reform as President of the United States.

The American people believe in immigration, but they also believe that we can't tolerate a situation where people come to the United States in violation of the law, nor can we tolerate employers who exploit undocumented workers in order to drive down wages. That's why we're taking steps to strengthen border security, and we must build on those efforts. We must also clarify the status of millions who are here illegally, many who have put down roots. For those who wish to become citizens, we should require them to pay a penalty and pay taxes, learn English, go to the back of the line behind those who played by the rules. That is the fair, practical, and promising way forward, and that's what I'm committed to passing as President of the United States.

We must never forget that time and again, the promise of America has been renewed by immigrants who make their story part of the American story. We see it in every State of our country. We see it in our families and in our neighborhoods. And as President, I've been honored to see it demonstrated by the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States.

You know, last month, I had the honor of welcoming a group of our servicemembers as citizens for the very first time. In that crowd, there were faces from every corner of the world. And one man from Nicaragua, Jeonathan Zapata, had waited his whole life to serve our country even though he was not yet a citizen. "By serving in the military," he said, "I can also give back to the United States." He's done so in Afghanistan, and he even helped man the 400,000th aircraft landing aboard the USS *Kitty Hawk*.

And Jeonathan's story is not unique either. He's part of a proud legacy of service. For generations, Hispanic Americans have served with great commitment and valor, and there are now nearly 150,000 Hispanic Americans serving under our flag. And today we are proud to welcome several of them who are wounded warriors recovering at Walter Reed. Please join me in honoring their service and in keeping them and all of our troops in our thoughts and prayers—please.

These troops have dedicated their lives to serving their fellow Americans. And their example, like those of all of our men and women in uniform, should challenge us to ask what we can do to better serve our communities and our country, because the greatest responsibility that we have as citizens is to one another.

That's the spirit we need to build; that's the America that we seek. And to do so, we must

look past our divisions to serve the hopes and dreams that we hold in common. We must give life to that fundamental belief that I am my brother's keeper, that I am my sister's keeper.

Scripture tells us, "The word is very near to you. It is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it." Today let us pray for the strength to find the word in our hearts and for the vision to see the America that we can build together as one nation and as one people.

Thank you for your partnership. Thank you for your prayers. May God bless all of you, and may God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:32 a.m. at the J.W. Marriott hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Joshua DuBois, Director, White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships; Rev. Luis Cortes, Jr., founder and president, Esperanza; Adolfo Carrion, Jr., Director, White House Office of Urban Affairs; Supreme Court Associate Justice-designate Sonia Sotomayor; and PO 3d Class Jeonathan E. Zapata, USN.

Remarks to Participants of the Year Up Center in Arlington, Virginia
June 19, 2009

The President. How is everybody doing today?

Audience members. Good.

The President. Doing good?

Audience members. Yes.

The President. Well, it is good to see you—it is impressive. First of all, I want to thank Gerald for founding this extraordinary program. Give him a big round of applause. And I want to thank Tynesia for running this thing in an extraordinary way. It seems like she's doing a great job. Give her a big round of applause.

So I am just very excited to be here. I just met four of your fellow Year Up participants, and they represented you very well. And they told me a little bit about the program.

I know that so many of you are doing extraordinary things now, but you've had your bumps in the road, and there have been some tough times. And part of the reason we wanted to come here is that Father's Day is coming up, and a lot of young people in America these days are growing up without fathers in the house, and as a consequence, without direction. And I'm somebody who didn't have a father in my house when I was coming up. And what we wanted to do was to highlight the fact that, first of all, there are all kinds of people who succeed despite the obstacles, but also to remind ourselves that there's so much talent out there that is untapped because people don't have pathways to success, and they don't have somebody who is giving them a hand and giving them advice and giving them counsel.

And so, number one, we want to send out a message that our parents—that's the first foundation—and fathers especially need to be involved with their children's lives. So the young men who are here today, I just want you to know that even if your father was not there, you can be there for your child when you have a child—and it's not a bad thing to wait to have a child—[*laughter*]—until you've got your act together.

But the second message was also to say that we as a community can help provide young people with support and direction. And I think that this Year Up program is a terrific example of that.

So I just want to thank all of you for being great model—role models for your peers and for younger people who are coming up; your brothers and sisters, people in the community, they're all watching you. I want to remind you that things are going to get tough at times in your lives, and I don't want anybody here to feel discouraged. Right now the economy is going through a very tough time, which means that the job market is more restrictive, especially for young people entering the market. But the skills that you've obtained and the poise, character that you've been developing is

something that will last you a lifetime, and you will be successful as long as you stick with it.

So we're just very proud of you. That's it from me. Now what I want to do is just open it up and have questions.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:40 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gerald Chertavian, founder and chief executive officer, Year Up; and Tynesia Boyea Robinson, executive director, Year Up, Washington DC.

Remarks at a Town Hall Meeting on Fatherhood and a Question-and-Answer Session

June 19, 2009

The President. Hello, everybody. Please be seated. Thank you so much. And let me, first of all, thank John and Joe and Juan Carlos and Etan and Mike for sharing their remarkable stories with us. And let me thank Mike Strautmanis for helping to guide us through this process. Where did Mike go? There he is over there.

A couple other people that I want to acknowledge. First of all, our terrific Secretary of Transportation, Ray LaHood, is here in the house. A dear friend of mine, former colleague in the Senate, Senator Evan Bayh is here; where is—Evan go. Okay. Chicago's own, Congressman Danny Davis, from the West Side—where's Danny? He was here a second ago. Give him a round of applause anyway.

And I want to thank kids from the Life Pieces to Masterpieces as well—and Foundry United Methodist Church. Thank you very much for your participation. And I want to thank members of the faith-based advisory council's subcommittee on fatherhood that has helped us to organize these events today.

Good afternoon, everybody. It is wonderful to see you. I see some familiar faces in the house. Rev, how are you doing? It is great to have all of you here today as we gear up to celebrate Father's Day and to recognize the vital role that fathers play in our communities and obviously, in our families.

This town hall marks the beginning of a national conversation that we hope to start about fatherhood and personal responsibility, about how fathers across America are meeting the challenges in their families and communities, and what government can do to support those who are having a difficult time. Today you've had a chance to hear from five of those fathers, men who are doing an outstanding job of meeting their obligations in their own lives.

We all know the difference that a responsible, committed father like those five gentlemen can make in the life of a child. Fathers are our first teachers and coaches. They're our mentors; they're our role models. They set an example of success, and they push us to succeed, encourage us when we're struggling. And they love us even when we disappoint them, and they stand by us when nobody else will.

And when fathers are absent, when they abandon their responsibilities to

we know the damage that that does to our families. Some of you know the statistics. Children who grow up without fathers are more likely to drop out of school and wind up in prison. They're more likely to have substance abuse problems, run away from home, and become teenage parents themselves.

And I say this as someone who grew up without a father in my own life. Now, I had a heroic mom and wonderful grandparents who helped raise me and my sister, and it's because of them that I'm able to stand here today. But despite all their extraordinary love and attention, that doesn't mean that I didn't feel my father's absence. That's something that leaves a hole in a child's heart that a government can't fill.

Our Government can build the best schools with the best teachers on Earth, but we still need fathers to ensure that kids are coming home and doing their homework and having a book instead of the TV remote every once in a while. Government can put more cops on the streets, but only fathers can make sure that those kids aren't on the streets in the first place. Government can create good jobs, but we need

fathers to train for these jobs and hold down these jobs and provide for their families.

If we want our children to succeed in life, we need fathers to step up. We need fathers to understand that their work doesn't end with conception; that what truly makes a man a father is the ability to raise a child and invest in that child.

And we need fathers to be involved in their kids' lives not just when it's easy—not just during the afternoons in the park or at the zoo, when it's all fun and games—but when it's hard, when young people are struggling, and there aren't any quick fixes or easy answers, and that's when young people need compassion and patience as well as a little bit of tough love.

Now, this is a challenge even in good times. And it can be especially tough during times like these, when parents have a lot on their minds. They're worrying about keeping their jobs or keeping their homes or their health care, paying their bills, trying to give their children the same opportunities that they had. And so it's understandable that parents get concerned. Some fathers who feel they can't support their families get distracted. And even those who are more fortunate may be physically present but emotionally absent.

I know that some of the young men who are here today might have their own concerns one day about being a dad. Some of you might be worried that if you didn't have a father, then you don't know how to be one when your turn comes. Some of you might even use that as an excuse and say, "Well, if my dad wasn't around, why should I be?"

Let's be clear: Just because your own father wasn't there for you, that's not an excuse for you to be absent also. It's all the more reason for you to be present. Now, there's no rule that says that you have to repeat your father's mistakes. Just the opposite; you have an obligation to break the cycle and to learn from those mistakes and to rise up where your own fathers fell short and to do better than they did with your own children.

That's what I've tried to do in my life. When my daughters were born, I made a pledge to them and to myself that I would do everything I could to give them some things I didn't have. And I decided that if I could be one thing in life, it would be to be a good father.

I haven't always known exactly how to do that. I've made my share of mistakes; I've had to ask a lot of questions. But I've also learned from men that I admire. And one good example is Michelle's father, Fraser Robinson, who was a shining example of loving, responsible fatherhood. Here is a man who was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis when he was 30 years old, but he still got up every day, went to a blue-collar job. By the time I knew him, he was using two crutches to get around, but he always was able to get to every dance recital, every ballgame of Michelle's brother. He was there constantly and helped to shape extraordinary success for his children.

And that's the standard that I strive for, though I don't always meet it. And as I've said before, I've made mistakes as a parent, and I'm sure I will make plenty more. There have been days when the demands of work have taken me from my duties as a father, and I've missed some moments in my daughters' lives that I'll never get back. So I've been far from perfect.

But in the end, it's not about being perfect. It's not always about succeeding, but it's about always trying. And that's something everybody can do. It's about showing up and sticking with it and going back at it when you mess up and letting your kids know, not just with words, but with deeds, that you love them and that you're always—they're always your first priority.

And we need dads, but also men who aren't dads, to make this kind of commitment not just in their own homes to their own families, but to the many young people out there who aren't lucky enough to have responsible adults in their lives. We need committed, compassionate men to serve as mentors and tutors and big brothers and foster parents. Even if it's just for a couple hours a week of shooting hoops or helping with homework or just talking about what's going on in that young person's life. Even the smallest moments can end up having an enormous impact, a lasting impact on a child's life.

So I am grateful to many of the organizations that are here, that are working on these issues. Some are faith-based, some are not. Some are government funded, some are privately funded. But all of you have those same commitments to making sure that we are lifting up the importance of fatherhood in our communities.

This is not the end, this is the beginning of what I hope is going to be a national dialog. And we're going to have regional town hall meetings, as Mike may have mentioned, to make sure that participants all across the country are starting to have that positive effect in their communities.

And I especially want to thank the young people who are here today, because you're the ones who are going to have to carry this message forward.

So with that—I know we've already had some discussion, and what I want to do is to see if we can expand the conversation. We should have some microphones in the audience so that everybody can be heard. Am I correct? Mike, are you going to be like Oprah?

Mr. Michael Strautmanis. I'm not going to be like Oprah. [*Laughter*] This is for you.

The President. All right. This is for you. Okay. So what I want to do is just call on some folks. They can ask a question; they can share a story. Organizations that are doing great work on fatherhood, please tell us a little bit about the work that you are doing. And I want to especially hear from some of the young people who somehow ended up sitting in the back. [*Laughter*] I don't know how that happened. But—all right, I'm going to start with this young man right here.

Go ahead. Introduce yourself. Stand up, please.

Growing Up Without a Father

Q. Yes. My name is Roland Warren. I'm president of an organization called National Fatherhood Initiative. And first, just thank you for what you're doing on this issue. Just—and a lot of folks have been sort of toiling on this issue for a number of years, and to have you come forward and step up and make this a national priority is really important.

And one of the things I just want to say to you, that your message, in terms of the fact that even though you've had, obviously, tremendous success without your dad, the fact that you really needed him and that kids have a hole in their souls essentially in the shape of their dad, I think, is pretty important, because we really need to focus on that issue; that we got to change the legacy and help our kids pass on the legacy—have our dads pass on a different legacy than maybe they inherited.

I grew up without my dad as well and went to Princeton and things of that nature, but still needed him. And that's one of the reasons I do the work that I do. So I really——

The President. Terrific.

Q. ——am delighted that you're doing the great work that you're doing around this issue.

The President. Thank you so much. Yes, I really want to emphasize this point about how just small moments and gestures can make a huge difference. A lot of folks know I love playing basketball. But it was my father who gave me my first basketball. Even though he wasn't a part of my life, in the few weeks that I was with him, he gave me a basketball.

A lot of folks know I love jazz. It turns out he took me to my first jazz concert. I didn't remember this until later on in life, but just that imprint is powerful. And imagine if that's sustained every day. And especially, young men, when they hit the teenage years, to have somebody there who is there to steady them and to provide them with some guidance, that makes all the difference in the world.

And again, this is not to take away from the heroic work that moms are doing. It's to emphasize moms need some help, because if you're a single mom like mine was, and maybe they're going to school or working, the pressures are enormous. And having somebody else there who's able to carry on that child-rearing responsibility is absolutely critical.

So anybody else? Let me get one of these young people here. Go ahead.

Fatherhood and the Presidency

Q. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Larry Holmes. I attend St. Albans School for Boys. And I would like to ask you a question.

The President. Yes, go ahead.

Q. Traveling from State to State, country to country, being the President, which one is funner—being a father or being a President? [*Laughter*]

The President. Oh, well—well, I mean this: Nothing is more fun than being a father. Now, my kids aren't teenagers yet—[*laughter*]—so I don't know whether that will maintain itself. [*Laughter*] But right now the greatest joy I get is just hanging out with the girls and talking to them and watching them grow and succeed.

And probably the most fun that I've had since I've been President was actually at a parent-teachers conference where the teachers were bragging on my children. [*Laughter*] And I just sat there, and I just basked in the glory of—[*laughter*]. And that—nothing is more important than that. And I think a lot of fathers can relate to that.

But here's the important point, is that, with as many responsibilities as I have—and I've got a huge support structure and staff and whatnot—it turns out that you can still carve out time to make sure that you're having a conversation with your kid.

And what it does mean is, is that fathers sometimes have to give up stuff that they'd like to do instead, like just sit there and watch "Sportscenter." [*Laughter*] And I know we got D-Wade here. I like watching the highlights, but sometimes instead of watching the third, fourth, fifth time—[*laughter*]—"Sportscenter," I just watch it once—[*laughter*]—so that I can then spend time with the girls, because they don't like watching basketball that much. But being President is pretty fun too, no doubt about it.

All right. Great question. Next. Yes, sir, right here.

Training for Fathers

Q. Thank you, sir.

The President. Here, you got a microphone.

Q. Hi, Mr. President. My name is Chris Maples. I founded an organization in Indianapolis called Dads, Inc., four years ago today, actually. And I hope that these dialogs continue to let everybody know that this isn't a rich or poor, a North or South, a black or white; this is—this affects everybody from the upper class to the lower class. And that's who we work with, that broad range. And over these 4 years, I've just heard dramatic stories of—just so appreciative that we have a service in Indianapolis for all fathers, and that everybody is appreciative of that. And I hope we can keep that up on a national level too.

The President. Absolutely. Absolutely. I think this is really important to emphasize: Twenty-three percent of young people are growing up without fathers. Now, in the African American community, it's close to 50 percent, maybe a little over, depending on the statistics that you look at. So there is a real crisis going on in the African American community on this issue, but it is a more pervasive issue.

And I just went to a wonderful organization called Year Up that has young people who are getting trained after high school, most of them, on specific job-training skills, computer skills, but also how to conduct themselves in an office and write an e-mail and—et cetera. And it was wonderful talking to these young people. But one of the things I said specifically to the young men is that you can't use anything as an excuse not to be involved with your children. Because kids—they won't judge you based on whether you're wealthy or poor. They will judge you if you are abusive to their mother. They will judge you in terms of you not showing up when they need you. That's what makes a difference.

And kids will respect their fathers if their fathers are showing kindness and are modeling—that they're working hard and trying to do what's right for their families. And kids will understand that sometimes families fall on hard times. They get that. Joe Biden is here—and, Joe, actually, I want to talk to you, because you had a terrific relationship with your dad, but there was a time where your dad fell on some hard times, and yet you still talk about him all the time as the most important guiding role model in your life.

Vice President Joe Biden. Well, Mr. President, I think it's great what you're doing, by the way. This is a big deal. Folks, you know, the President said sometimes fathers make mistakes, and I've made my share. But there's one thing my father told me—there's a

mistake a father should never make, and that is communicating to his child there's anything other than total unconditional love. If there's total unconditional love—that includes discipline—but if there's total unconditional love, it doesn't matter whether you're rich or poor, whether or not you're a real smart dad or you're not such a smart dad, whether you're handsome or you're not so. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. Kids need love.

And as a single parent, Mr. President, I did that for a while, having two sons, as Evan knows. And what I can say to you is—my mom has an expression. He's always kidding me. I'm always saying my mom and dad's expressions. But my mom has an expression, and she said—I could hear her when she was a kid—or when I was a kid, saying it to her peers. She said, "Be careful how you treat your children; you may need them some day." [*Laughter*]

And I want to tell you, the President knows my sons and my daughter. It doesn't change. The happiest thing in the world is being a father. This day, my 40-year-old son is attorney general of the State of Delaware. The President sees it in my 39-year-old son and my 27-year-old daughter. If my son, Attorney General, Captain Biden walked in the door from Iraq today, the first thing he'd do is walk up and give me a kiss. I mean it. And this is not—a kid who knows how to handle himself.

But the point is it gives me more joy, and I think it gives every father in this room more joy than any other thing that happens in your life, whether your son or daughter does that.

So, Mr. President, you're a great President. You're a great dad. And you're really good to be doing this. It's a big deal.

The President. Thank you. All right. Thank you. All right. Anybody back here want to comment on some of the things they heard or saw or—go ahead.

The President's Decision to Run for Office

Q. I'd like to ask you a question, Mr. President. At one point, you had to decide you wanted to run for President, with two young daughters. Can you share with us how you had to wrestle with that decision?

The President. Well, it's a great question, and I think I've said this publicly before—the first question, the threshold question that I had to ask in conjunction with Michelle, because this was a joint decision, was, could our family handle it? And frankly, if it hadn't been for Michelle's extraordinary strength and commitment, I could not have done it and would not have done it. And she was able to handle, for big chunks of time, being like a single mom.

Now, I want to emphasize we are luckier than most; we've got more resources than most. And so I don't want to diminish how tough it is if you're working two shifts, you're coming home beat, and then suddenly you're also expected to help on the homework and do all these things. It's a big challenge for a lot of families. And we had more resources than most, but it was still a very difficult decision.

Frankly, I don't think we would have made the same decision if our kids were a little older. Part of the reason it was okay was because when I started running, Sasha was 5, Malia was 8, and they were still in Chicago; they had my mother-in-law, and they had a whole network and a community and a family that could help and support them. And so as a consequence, we figured out they would thrive.

The person who suffered the most was me, because I would be calling from God knows where, and they'd be having fun and laughing—[*laughter*]—and kids don't talk on the phone that well. [*Laughter*] So I'd be, "Sasha, how was your day?" "Fine." [*Laughter*] "What did you do?" "Nothing." [*Laughter*] You guys have had those conversations. [*Laughter*]

And so there were times where just physically I wanted to just be with them, and just couldn't. And so it was the hardest part of deciding to run for President.

The best thing about being President, by the way, is having a home office, because that means that I get home for dinner and—even if I have to go back to work, and then that makes all the difference in the world.

So, okay. Ed, got one right behind you. No, no, got one—right back.

Importance of Real-Life Images of Fatherhood

Q. I'm used to you throwing my questions away.

The President. No, I wouldn't do that. Go ahead.

Q. I'm just kidding. Listen, I just wanted to thank you very much. We started an initiative with Al Dotson and a hundred black men called Daddy's Promise, which really takes a look at fathers involving themselves in their daughters' lives, and you've been a great image for that. And what I just wanted to tell everybody is the service that you've given us, just with the image of you and your family and your daughters, has gone and made tenfold in terms of it being easier to tell men to involve themselves, because as we know, the media and the image is so powerful. And, A, I'd like to thank you very much——

The President. I appreciate that.

Q. ——for that, and being upfront on that, and encourage everyone to do so in your neighborhoods, because as much as we look to this man and others in the media, it is those of you who are there on an everyday basis. And when you see parents with children, it goes a long, long way. So we thank you for that.

The President. Well, I appreciate that. But I think you made the right point, Ed, which is, it's one thing seeing people on TV; it's another thing seeing that young father down the street who's just like you, except he's holding his baby in his arms or taking that toddler to the park or participating in the Little League. That's where young people get, sort of, their images, what it means to be a man, more than they do from whatever is on the screen. But I very much appreciate what you said.

Okay, I'm going to call on a token mom here just so that she can comment on these things.

Positive Portrayals of Fathers

Q. I'm Reverend Dr. Barbara Williams Skinner.

The President. It's great to see you.

Q. Good to see you. I want to say for women—I'm a mother and a grandmother—this is a day of celebration for us. We just felt our shoulders lifted. Not having had a father, but I—thank you for Bill Cowher and Mr. McDaniels from Run DMC coming over to Ballou. The only time you hear about Ballou High School is when someone is shot or killed. Today the kids asked us—they said, "They're coming to see us?" So I want to thank you on their behalf—that you cared enough about children who are on the other side of the river.

And now my question is, how do we keep lifting up the stories of the kid who's not in trouble, who goes past the drug dealers, who decides to stay in school, as opposed to all the—we spend so much emphasis on what's not working. How do we talk about what is working?

The President. Well, look, I think you make a great point. First of all, I do want to thank all these wonderful men who took the time to go out and—Coach Cowher, this is the first time that you've seen Redskins fans cheer for you—[*laughter*]—that doesn't happen that often—but these extraordinary men for taking the time to do this. Please give them a big round of applause.

But I think you're absolutely right, Reverend, that sometimes we've got to lift up success instead of just remarking on failure, because—the young men that I met at the trip that I took to Year Up, these were extraordinary young people. They were poised, and they were polished, and they were—and these are all kids from the neighborhood, but they had—somebody had reached out to show that they care.

And it turns out that young people are incredibly resilient. It doesn't take that much. All it takes is somebody to put a hand on them and say, "You know what? You're important, and I'm listening to you." And if it's the wrong person who's putting that hand on them, if it's the gang-banger that's putting that hand on them, then they'll respond to that. And if it's a person in the community who is working hard, they'll respond to that.

And so we do need to affirm positive behavior and not just condemn negative behavior, because a lot of times young people just—they just need to be told that if you—one of the neat things about this program that I was

looking at was they had a whole code. The first thing that they trained young people on was how do you interact with others, so everybody that you met, they were shaking your hand and looking at you in the eye, and they weren't mumbling. And there were certain words that they had banned from usage, not just curse words, either. They were saying, you know, don't go around saying, "shorty" and "What's up, G?" and—because that's not professional. And all that was important to them, and they absorbed it very quickly. But it requires spending a little time and then lifting up some role models. So, okay?

Mr. Strautmanis. Last question.

The President. All right. This is always tough, the last-question thing. [*Laughter*] I'm going to call on one of these young people again. Here you go. Go ahead. This young man right here; he had his hand up.

The President's Experiences as a First-Time Father

Q. I was wondering——

The President. What's your name?

Q. I'm Nick, and I'm also from St. Albans.

The President. Hey, Nick. Yes, you're with this crew here.

Q. And, Mr. President, I was wondering how you felt when you first became a father.

The President. Well, let me tell you the story of me. First of all, Malia was born on the Fourth of July. And every first father has this memory of you're waiting and you're waiting, and then suddenly Michelle woke me up at around 3–4 o'clock, and I was sleepy, and she says, "Hey, buster, I think this may be happening." And you jump out—it was like a movie. I was jumping out of the bed and looking for my shoes and the bag.

And things went fairly smoothly. But the first time you see that child, and bringing her home, driving really slow—[*laughter*]—in that little car seat, and then that night, knowing that there was this new life inside your house in a little bassinet, and remembering to check on them every 5 minutes to make sure they're still breathing—[*laughter*]—and then feeling them lying on your chest when you've fed them and they're falling asleep, and you knew at that moment something that—if you're not a father yet, people say and you don't believe, which is, at that moment, you realize you will do anything for that child—that there's nothing you wouldn't do for them in a heartbeat. And that bond between a parent and a child is something that is precious. It's sacred, and it's a true blessing.

And sometimes I think in the hustle of life you forget what a blessing that is, and that ultimately, after all this stuff is done, after Joe and I are retired and nobody knows our name—[*laughter*]—the one thing that we'll remember is—are those moments when you were holding your kid and watching them grow and the first time they walked. And that's the stuff that will stay with you.

And that's why, if there's one last thing I want to communicate to those fathers who maybe haven't been involved in their child's life, it's to emphasize that this isn't an obligation. This is a privilege to be a father. And that's something that all of us should take on for themselves.

So thank you, everybody, for participating. I appreciate you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:34 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. Participating in the town hall were CPO John Lehnen, USN, Command Naval Reserve Force Command, Transportation Command, Norfolk, VA; Joseph T. Jones, Jr., founder, president, and chief executive officer, Center for Urban Families; Juan Carlos Artero, graduate of the Year Up program; Etan Thomas, center, National Basketball Association's Washington Wizards; Mike Laas, president, James H. Laas Company; Chief of Staff to the Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Relations and Public Engagement Michael Strautmanis; Dwyane Wade, guard, National Basketball Association's Miami Heat; Albert E. Dotson, national president, 100 Black Men; Ed Gordon, founder, Daddy's Promise; Barbra Williams Skinner, president, Skinner Leadership Institute; Bill Cowher, former head coach, National Football League's Pittsburgh Steelers; and Darryl "DMC" McDaniels, member of the hip-hop group Run DMC. In his remarks, the President referred to

his sister Maya Soetoro-Ng; his brother-in-law Craig Robinson; television personality and entrepreneur Oprah Winfrey; and his mother-in-law Marian Robinson.

Remarks at a Barbeque for Young Men
June 19, 2009

Hello, everybody. Everybody have a seat. Now, first of all, let's give thanks that it's not raining, because we thought it might be and we were worried that Bobby would be sending smoke into the White House. But it's a beautiful day.

I want to personally acknowledge, once again—they've already been introduced, but I want to introduce them because some of you young people are sitting with them—you may not know who you're sitting with—the extraordinary men who are participating in this event today. First of all, Chief Quartermaster John Lehnen—thank you so much, John. Some of you may know this guy, Dwyane Wade. I hear he plays basketball pretty good. [*Laughter*] Etan Thomas, another ballplayer; Joseph Jones, Center for Urban Families; Greg Brown, who is the CEO of Motorola; Antwaan Randle El, outstanding football player; Dr. Steve Rosen, Northwestern Cancer Center; Jorge Ramos, one of the premier journalists in the country; B.D. Wong, outstanding actor; Tony Hawk, who is the best skateboarder in the world; Coach Bill Cowher of the championship Steelers; Darryl "DMC" McDaniels; Mike Laas, who is a small businessman; Senator Evan Bayh, former colleague of ours; Fatherhood Dads, Inc., president David Ladd; the president of Morehouse College, Dr. Robert Franklin; as well as some of the outstanding members of my staff—Mike Strautmanis, Denis McDonough, Reggie Love. And we also want to thank Bobby Flay, one of the best chefs in the world, for providing us with these unbelievably good-looking grub over here.

I don't want to talk long. I want to come around and say hello to everybody. I just want to thank all of you for participating. For the young people who are here today, I just hope that the message that we're sending out about how important fathers are is something that you will internalize, because all of you are probably going to end up being fathers. And the time is now, to start thinking about what that means in terms of responsibilities, what it means to be a man. And the men who are—you're going to be sitting with today, I think, exemplify—whether they're famous or not famous, rich or not so rich, they embody that spirit of love and dedication and commitment that fatherhood is all about.

So we appreciate all of you. I don't want to get in the way of the food. Thank you for participating. Hope you guys have a good time. And to all the fathers out there, happy Father's Day. All right?

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:25 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to CPO John Lehnen, USN, Command Naval Reserve Force Command, Transportation Command, Norfolk, VA; Dwyane Wade, guard, National Basketball Association's Miami Heat; Etan Thomas, center, National Basketball Association's Washington Wizards; Joseph T. Jones, Jr., founder, president, and chief executive officer, Center for Urban Families; Antwaan Randle El, wide receiver, National Football League's Washington Redskins; Steven T. Rosen, director, Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center, Northwestern University; Bill Cowher, former head coach, National Football League's Pittsburgh Steelers; Darryl "DMC" McDaniels, member of the hip-hop group Run DMC; Mike Laas, president, James H. Laas Company; Chief of Staff to the Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Relations and Public Engagement Michael Strautmanis; Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Denis R. McDonough; and Personal Aide to the President Reginald L. Love.

Statement on Proposed Health Care Reform Legislation
June 19, 2009

Today the chairs of several committees in the House of Representatives unveiled their health care reform proposal. This proposal would improve the affordability, availability, and quality of health care and represents a major step toward the—our goal of fixing what is broken about health care while building on what works.

Statement on the Observance of Juneteenth
June 19, 2009

On this day in 1865, more than 2 years after President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, those who found themselves still enslaved in Galveston, Texas had their hopes realized and their prayers answered. Contrary to what others had told them, the rumors they had heard were indeed true: The Civil War had ended, and they were now free.

General Gordon Granger issued the call with "General Order No. 3" saying, "The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free." June 19, or Juneteenth, is now observed in 31 States. Nearly a century and a half later, the descendants of slaves and slave owners can commemorate the day together and celebrate the rights and freedoms we all share in this great nation that we all love.

This moment also serves as a time for reflection and appreciation, and an opportunity for many people to trace their family's lineage. African Americans helped to build our Nation brick by brick and have contributed to her growth in every way, even when rights and liberties were denied to them. In light of the historic unanimous vote in the United States Senate this week supporting the call for an apology for slavery and segregation, the occasion carries even more significance.

Remarks at the Radio and Television Correspondents Association Dinner
June 19, 2009

Thanks to all of you. Thank you. Please, everybody, have a seat. Before I get started, as the father of two girls, can I just say how incredibly impressive those three young ladies were. Dad would be proud.

To Heather and all the others who have made this evening possible, thank you so much. It is wonderful to be here. I want to express my appreciation for the opportunity to tell jokes that weren't funny enough for me to use when we did this 5 weeks ago. [*Laughter*] Whatever. [*Laughter*] The jokes may not be as good, but neither is the guest list. [*Laughter*] I'm just joking. For me, there's no contest. Why bother hanging out with celebrities when I can spend time with the people who made me one? [*Laughter*] I know where my bread is buttered.

Plus, we have our own luminaries here in attendance. The junior Senator from Wyoming, John Barrasso, is here.

[*At this point, White House Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs came to the podium and whispered in the President's ear.*]

I'm sorry, John Barasso skipped this evening. [*Laughter*] Let me tell you, though, for those who haven't met him, John Barrasso is the George Clooney of junior Senators from Wyoming. [*Laughter*]

It is great to be here with so much talent from the world of TV and radio. Despite the flood of new media, I think your programming is more relevant than ever before. At least,

that's the impression I get when I read the blogs every day. [*Laughter*]

It's good to see a number of hard-working correspondents here tonight. Journalists like Chuck Todd. I think I spotted Chuck over there somewhere. At this dinner, Chuck embodies the best of both worlds: He has the rapid-fire style of a television correspondent and the facial hair of a radio correspondent. [*Laughter*]

Mika Brzezinski is here, I believe, in the house. Mika and I have a lot in common. We both have partners named Joe who used to be in Congress and don't know when to stop talking. [*Laughter*]

And happening now: Wolf Blitzer is here. He's the only man—[*applause*]—the only other man in America with his own situation room. [*Laughter*] People assume that mine is cooler, but this is not the case. As hard as we've tried, we have not been able to generate the bandwidth necessary to turn Larry Summers into a hologram. [*Laughter*] We can't do it.

Now, one person that you know could not be here tonight is Secretary Hillary Clinton. As most of you know, Hillary broke her elbow a few days ago on her way to the White House. And we all wish her a very speedy recovery. I do have to say, though, that while it's been reported as an accident, there were some suspicious circumstances. [*Laughter*] Just before the incident, Secret Service spotted Richard Holbrooke spraying WD–40 all over the driveway. [*Laughter*] So now, on top of the costs of health care and energy and the recovery plan, we've got another fiscal problem. Fortunately, the lawyers tell me that Hillary is ready to settle. [*Laughter*]

I have to admit, though, it wasn't easy coming up with fresh material for this dinner. A few nights ago, I was up tossing and turning, trying to figure out exactly what to say. Finally, when I couldn't get back to sleep, I rolled over and asked Brian Williams what he thought. [*Laughter*]

Now, the truth is, Brian Williams is actually a terrible house guest. He put an empty milk carton back in the fridge. He leaves his wet towels all over the Roosevelt Room. We're pretty sure he clogged the toilet and didn't tell anybody. [*Laughter*]

Although I must say, the whole thing was worth it. "Inside the Obama White House" is my favorite new show. [*Laughter*] There's just something really compelling about the main character. [*Laughter*] It's a wonderful narrative. In fact, the show has been such a hit that all of you guys now want to come and tape one in my house. ABC is planning a series called "Dancing with the Czars." [*Laughter*] TLC has got something called "Jon & Kate plus Peter Orszag." [*Laughter*] That's going to be good. [*Laughter*] Nick at Nite has a new take on an old classic, "Leave it to Uighurs." I thought that was pretty good. [*Laughter*]

Of course, given the fiscal crisis in California, these shows all will be competing directly with Governor Schwarzenegger's new reality series, "I'm a Celebrity—Get Me Out of Here!" [*Laughter*] That's how I feel tonight. [*Laughter*]

Look, it's nothing personal, but this dinner conflicts with my date night. [*Laughter*] I was supposed to be going out with Michelle for Thai food—in Bangkok. [*Laughter*]

But I have been doing a lot of traveling. I just returned from a trip abroad, as you know. In Egypt, we had the opportunity to tour the pyramids. By now I'm sure all of you have seen the pictures of Rahm on a camel. I admit I was a little nervous about the whole situation. I said at the time, "This is a wild animal known to bite and kick and spit. And who knows what the camel might do?" [*Laughter*]

But I have to say, as I traveled to all these countries, I saw firsthand how much people truly have in common with one another. Because no matter where I went, there's one thing I heard over and over again from every world leader: "No thanks, but have you considered Palau?" [*Laughter*]

Of course, most of my attention has been focused here back home. As you know, we've been working around the clock to repair our major financial institutions and our auto companies. But you probably wouldn't understand the concept of troubled industries, working as you do in the radio and television industry.

[*Members of the audience groaned.*]

Oh, we don't joke about that, huh? [*Laughter*] That's not funny. [*Laughter*]

One problem we're trying to solve is the high cost of health care in America. And I'm pleased that in our quest to reform the health care system, I've gained the support of the American Medical Association. It proves true the old expression that it's easier to catch flies with honey. And if honey doesn't work, feel free to use an open palm and a swift, downward movement.

Now, the challenges we face are many, and I'll be honest, I don't have all the answers. And when I'm not sure what's right, I often ask myself, "WWLD?"—"What would a wise Latino do?" I'm proud of my nominee, Sonia Sotomayor. And all those who oppose her, to all those who say that there's no place for empathy on the bench, I say this: I completely understand how you're feeling. [*Laughter*] When you're upset, I'm upset. [*Laughter*]

Another difficult challenge is how to help our automakers thrive in the 21st century. We've tried a number of different approaches, and tonight, I'm announcing a new one. It's a plan passed on to me by a close friend and adviser, Oprah Winfrey. So if each of you will look under your seat, you find that you get a car company! [*Laughter*] You get a car company! And FOX, you get AIG. [*Laughter*] Enjoy!

The truth is, as I've said all along, I have no ambition to run an auto company. I'm not the salesman in chief. And GM will rise or fall on the quality of its products, like the taut, athletic design of the new Buick Enclave. [*Laughter*] It's French-seamed leather and warm wood tones make the Enclave more than transportation. It's a modern driver's retreat. [*Laughter*] Come on, work with me here. I've got cars to move, people!

In all seriousness, despite the jokes I've told, I'm here tonight because I appreciate the work that all of you do and the role that you play. You report the news as it happens, and you're covering history as it's made. With a hand-held camera or a mike, or now even a cell phone or a blog, you bring the truth to people and allow people to bring truth to the world.

We're seeing that now as history is unfolding. In the sounds and images broadcast from Iran over the last week, we've seen professional and citizen journalists act as a voice for those who want to be heard, bearing witness to universal aspirations of democracy and freedom. Often at great risk and sometimes with great sacrifice, they do it because the rest of us need to hear the stories that they tell. In recent years, we've seen the same courageous reporting in Iraq, in Afghanistan, and the Congo, and in every dangerous corner of the world. And everywhere there's a story that needs to be told.

I think all of you understand these are changing times. As journalists, you understand that better than anyone. But one thing that will never change is the need to report the news as it happens, wherever it happens. This is what you do, and this is what will help us meet the challenges of our time. We are grateful to you for that.

Thank you. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:50 p.m. at the Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Ava, Christine, and Nicole Bloom, daughters of David Bloom, an NBC News reporter who died while embedded with the U.S. Army's 3d Infantry Division in Iraq in 2003; Heather Dahl, chair, Radio and Television Correspondents Association, who introduced the President; actor George Clooney; Chuck Todd, chief White House correspondent, NBC News; Mika Brzezinski, cohost, and Joe Scarborough, host, MSNBC's "Morning Joe"; Vice President Joe Biden; Wolf Blitzer, anchor, CNN's "Situation Room with Wolf Blitzer"; National Economic Council Director Lawrence H. Summers; Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton; Richard C. Holbrooke, U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan; Brian Williams, anchor, NBC Nightly News; reality television show personalities Jon and Kate Gosselin; Peter R. Orszag, Director, Office of Management and Budget; Gov.

Arnold A. Schwarzenegger of California; White House Chief of Staff Rahm I. Emanuel; Supreme Court Associate Justice-designate Sonia Sotomayor; and talk show host Oprah Winfrey. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 20.

The President's Weekly Address
June 20, 2009

As we continue to recover from a historic economic crisis, it's clear to everyone that one of its major causes was a breakdown in oversight that led to widespread abuses in the financial system. An epidemic of irresponsibility took hold from Wall Street to Washington to Main Street, and the consequences have been disastrous: millions of Americans have seen their life savings erode; families have been devastated by job losses; businesses large and small have closed their doors.

In response, this week, my administration proposed a set of major reforms to the rules that govern our financial system; to attack the causes of this crisis and to prevent future crises from taking place; to ensure that our markets can work fairly and freely for businesses and consumers alike.

We're going to promote markets that work for those who play by the rules. We're going to stand up for a system in which fair dealing and honest competition are the only way to win. We're going to level the playing field for consumers, and we're going to have the kinds of rules that encourage innovations that make our economy stronger, not those that allow insiders to exploit its weaknesses for their own gain.

And one of the most important proposals is a new oversight agency called the Consumer Financial Protection Agency. It's charged with just one job: looking out for the interests of ordinary Americans in the financial system. This is essential, for this crisis may have started on Wall Street, but its impacts have been felt by ordinary Americans who rely on credit cards, home loans, and other financial instruments.

It's true that this crisis was caused in part by Americans who took on too much debt and took out loans they simply could not afford. But there are also millions of Americans who signed contracts they didn't always understand offered by lenders who didn't always tell the truth. Today, folks signing up for a mortgage, student loan, or credit card face a bewildering array of incomprehensible options. Companies compete not by offering better products, but more complicated ones, with more fine print and hidden terms. It's no coincidence that the lack of strong consumer protections led to abuses against consumers; the lack of rules to stop deceptive lending practices led to abuses against borrowers.

This new agency will have the responsibility to change that. It will have the power to set tough new rules so that companies compete by offering innovative products that consumers actually want and actually understand. Those ridiculous contracts, pages of fine print that no one can figure out, will be a thing of the past. You'll be able to compare products, with descriptions in plain language, to see what is best for you. The most unfair practices will be banned, and the rules will be enforced.

Though some argue that these changes, and the many others we've called for, go too far. I welcome a debate about how we can make sure our regulations work for businesses and consumers. But what I will not accept, what I will vigorously oppose, are those who do not argue in good faith; those who would defend the status quo at any cost; those who put their narrow interests ahead of the interests of ordinary Americans. We've already begun to see special interests mobilizing against change. And that's not surprising, that's Washington.

For these are interests that have benefited from a system which allow ordinary Americans to be exploited. These interests argue against reform even as millions of people are facing the consequences of this crisis in their own lives. These interests defend business-as-usual even though we know that it was business-as-usual that allowed this crisis to take place.

Well, the American people did not send me to Washington to give in to the special

interests; the American people sent me to Washington to stand up for their interests. And while I'm not spoiling for a fight, I'm ready for one. The most important thing we can do to put this era of irresponsibility in the past is to take responsibility now. That's why my administration will accept no less than real and lasting change to the way business is done, on Wall Street and in Washington. We will do what is necessary to end this crisis, and we will do what it takes to prevent this kind of crisis from ever happening again.

Thank you.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 5 p.m. on June 19 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast on June 20. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 19 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 20.

Statement on the Situation in Iran
June 20, 2009

The Iranian Government must understand that the world is watching. We mourn each and every innocent life that is lost. We call on the Iranian Government to stop all violent and unjust actions against its own people. The universal rights to assembly and free speech must be respected, and the United States stands with all who seek to exercise those rights.

As I said in Cairo, suppressing ideas never succeeds in making them go away. The Iranian people will ultimately judge the actions of their own Government. If the Iranian Government seeks the respect of the international community, it must respect the dignity of its own people and govern through consent, not coercion.

Martin Luther King once said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." I believe that; the international community believes that. And right now we are bearing witness to the Iranian people's belief in that truth, and we will continue to bear witness.

Statement on Medicare Reform
June 20, 2009

I am pleased to announce that an agreement has been reached between Senator Max Baucus and the Nation's pharmaceutical companies that will bring down health care costs and reduce the price of prescription drugs for millions of America's seniors. As part of the health reform legislation that I expect Congress to enact this year, pharmaceutical companies will extend discounts on prescription drugs to millions of seniors who currently are subjected to crushing out-of-pocket expenses when the yearly amounts they pay for medication fall within the doughnut hole: any payments by seniors not covered by Medicare that fall between $2,700 and $6,153.75 per year. The existence of this gap in coverage has been a continuing injustice that has placed a great burden on many seniors. This deal will provide significant relief from that burden for millions of American seniors.

The agreement by pharmaceutical companies to contribute to the health reform effort comes on the heels of the landmark pledge many health industry leaders made to me last month, when they offered to do their part to reduce health spending $2 trillion over the next decade. We are at a turning point in America's journey toward health care reform. Key sectors of the health care industry acknowledge what American families and businesses already know, that the status quo is no longer sustainable. The agreement reached today to lower prescription drug costs for seniors will be an important part of the legislation I expect to sign into law in October. I want to commend House Chairmen Henry Waxman, George Miller, and Charles

Rangel for addressing this issue in the health reform legislation they unveiled this week. This is a tangible example of the type of reform that will lower costs while assuring quality health care for every American.

Remarks on Health Care Reform
June 22, 2009

Thank you. Well, first of all, I want to thank Barry Rand for the introduction, but also AARP, the organization he so ably represents, for coming together with us on this critical issue today.

Last week, in my address to the American Medical Association, I spoke about the urgent need for health care reform and what will be required to achieve it. And one of the things that will be required, I said, was that everyone in our health care community is going to have to come together and do their part.

In recent days, Chairman Max Baucus, who has been doing an outstanding job leading the Finance Committee on this issue, as well as members of my administration, have been in discussions with the pharmaceutical industry to find a way to bring down costs of prescription drugs for America's seniors. And I'm pleased to report that over the weekend we reached an understanding that will help close the notorious doughnut hole in Medicare Part D. This is a significant breakthrough on the road to health care reform, one that will make the difference in the lives of many older Americans.

I think many of you in the press are familiar with the issue. The doughnut hole refers to a gap in prescription drug coverage that makes it harder for millions of Medicare beneficiaries to pay for the medication they need. The way the program is structured, Medicare covers up to $2,700 in yearly prescription costs and then stops, and the coverage starts back up when the costs exceed 6,100, which means between 2,700 and 6,100 folks are out of luck. And this gap in coverage has placing a crushing burden on many older Americans who live on fixed incomes and can't afford thousands of dollars in out-of-pocket expenses.

Chris Dodd, who has been an outstanding leader on a whole host of health care issues throughout his career and who is helping to lead the HELP Committee while Senator Kennedy is undergoing his treatment for his illness—Chris, I think, will tell you that as we travel around the country, seniors would constantly be coming up to us and saying, how do we deal with this extraordinary burden? And as a consequence, you'd have seniors who would be taking half their medication, even though the doctor said that is not going to be as effective; you are putting your life at risk. They had no other choice.

So as part of the health care reform I expect Congress to enact this year, Medicare beneficiaries whose spending falls within this gap will now receive a discount on prescription drugs of at least 50 percent from the negotiated price their plan pays. It's a reform that will make prescription drugs more affordable for millions of seniors and restore a measure of fairness to Medicare Part D. It's a reflection of the importance of this single step for America's seniors that it has earned the support of AARP, which has been fighting for years to address this anomaly in the system on behalf of older Americans. AARP is committed, as I am, to achieving health care reform by the end of this year. And I'm committed to continuing to work with AARP to ensure that any reforms we pursue are carried out in a way that protects America's seniors, who know as well as anyone what's wrong with our health care system and why it's badly in need of reform.

Our goal, our imperative, is to reduce the punishing inflation in health care costs while improving patient care. And to do that we're going to have to work together to root out waste and inefficiencies that may pad the bottom line of the insurance industry, but add nothing to the health of our Nation. To that end, the pharmaceutical industry has committed to reduce its draw on the health care system by $80 billion over the next 10 years as part of overall health care reform.

Real health care reform that reduces the spiraling costs of health services and extends quality, affordable health coverage to all Americans will require these kinds of commitments throughout the system. And drug and insurance companies stand to benefit when tens of millions more Americans have coverage. So we're asking them, in exchange, to make essential concessions to reform the system and help reduce costs; it's only fair. Today marks a major step forward, but it will only be meaningful if we complete the journey.

So I want to commend the House for coming together last week to produce a health care reform bill, a bill, I might note, that protects seniors and has received the support of the AARP. I will continue to work closely with the relevant chairs in the House and the Senate, and leaders like Senator Dodd and Senator Baucus, and with members of both parties who are willing to commit themselves to this critical task. Our families, our businesses, and our long-term fiscal health demands that we act and act now. Today we are, and I'm grateful to all those who helped make this day possible. And to those who, here in Washington, who've grown accustomed to "sky is falling" prognoses and the certainties that we cannot get this done, I have to repeat—revive an old saying we had from the campaign: Yes we can. We are going to get this done.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:58 a.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to A. Barry Rand, chief executive officer, AARP.

Remarks on Signing the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act of 2009

June 22, 2009

The President. Please, everybody, have a seat, have a seat. I am thrilled to be here for what is I think an extraordinary accomplishment by this Congress, a bill we're about to sign into law.

I want to acknowledge a few of our special guests. First of all, we've got the crew from the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids: Eamon, Christopher, Sarah, and Hoai-Nam. We have our FDA Commissioner, Dr. Peggy Hamburg. We have our CDC Director, Tom Frieden. And we have just some extraordinary Members of Congress here on stage—Senator Dodd, Senator Durbin, Senator Enzi, Senator Harkin, Senator Lautenberg, Representative Waxman, Representative Dingell, Representative Christensen, Representative Pallone, and Representative Platts—all of whom did extraordinary work in helping to move this legislation forward. Please give them a big round of applause. I want to thank all of them.

Now, there are three Members of Congress that I have to especially thank: Representative Waxman, Representative Dodd, and—excuse me—[*laughter*]—Senator Dodd——

Senator Christopher J. Dodd. Things are tough enough. [*Laughter*]

The President. ——and most importantly, Senator Ted Kennedy, who can't be here today.

You know, the legislation I'm signing today represents change that's been decades in the making. Since at least the middle of the last century, we've known about the harmful and often deadly effects of tobacco products. More than 400,000 Americans now die of tobacco-related illnesses each year, making it the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. More than 8 million Americans suffer from at least one serious illness caused by smoking, and these health problems cost us all more than $100 billion a year.

What's even worse are the effects on our children. One out of every five children in our country are now current smokers by the time they leave high school. Think about that statistic, one out of every five children in our country are now current smokers by the time they leave high school. Each day, 1,000 young people under the age of 18 become new, regular, daily

smokers. And almost 90 percent of all smokers began at or before their 18th birthday.

I know; I was one of these teenagers, and so I know how difficult it can be to break this habit when it's been with you for a long time. And I also know that kids today don't just start smoking for no reason. They're aggressively targeted as customers by the tobacco industry. They're exposed to a constant and insidious barrage of advertising where they live, where they learn, and where they play. Most insidiously, they are offered products with flavorings that mask the taste of tobacco and make it even more tempting.

We've known about this for decades, but despite the best efforts and good progress made by so many leaders and advocates with us today, the tobacco industry and its special interest lobbying have generally won the day up on the Hill. When Henry Waxman first brought tobacco CEOs before Congress in 1994, they famously denied that tobacco was deadly, nicotine was addictive, or that their companies marketed to children. And they spent millions upon millions in lobbying and advertising to fight back every attempt to expose these denials as lies.

Fifteen years later, their campaign has finally failed. Today, thanks to the work of Democrats and Republicans, health care and consumer advocates, the decades-long effort to protect our children from the harmful effects of tobacco has emerged victorious. Today change has come to Washington.

This legislation will not ban all tobacco products, and it will allow adults to make their own choices. But it will also ban tobacco advertising within a thousand feet of schools and playgrounds. It will curb the ability of tobacco companies to market products to our children by using appealing flavors. It will force these companies to more clearly and publicly acknowledge the harmful and deadly effects of the products they sell. And it will allow the scientists at the FDA to take other commonsense steps to reduce the harmful effects of smoking.

This legislation is a victory for bipartisanship, and it was passed overwhelmingly in both Houses of Congress. It's a victory for health care reform, as it will reduce some of the billions we spend on tobacco-related health care costs in this country. It's a law that will reduce the number of American children who pick up a cigarette and become adult smokers. And most importantly, it is a law that will save American lives and make Americans healthier.

We know that even with the passage of this legislation, our work to protect our children and improve the public's health is not complete. Today, tobacco is the leading preventable cause of death not just in America, but also in the world. If current trends continue, 1 billion people will die from tobacco-related illnesses this century. And so the United States will continue to work with the World Health Organization and other nations to fight this epidemic on a global basis.

But no matter how long or how hard this fight may be, what's happening today gives us hope. When I ran for President, I did so because I believed that despite the power of the status quo and the influence of special interests, it was possible for us to bring change to Washington. And the progress we've made these past 5 months has only reinforced my faith in this belief.

Despite the influence of the credit card industry, we passed a law to protect consumers from unfair rate hikes and abusive fees. Despite the influence of banks and lenders, we passed a law to protect homeowners from mortgage fraud. Despite the influence of the defense industry, we passed a law to protect taxpayers from waste and abuse in defense contracting. And today, despite decades of lobbying and advertising by the tobacco industry, we've passed a law to help protect the next generation of Americans from growing up with a deadly habit that so many of our generation have lived with.

When Henry Waxman opened that first hearing back in '94 on tobacco with the industry CEOs, he began by quoting an ancient proverb: "A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step." Our journey for change is far from over. But with the package of—passage of the kids tobacco legislation that I'm about to sign, we're taking another big and very important step, a step that will save lives and dollars. So I want to thank not only the

Members of Congress who are up on stage, but also all the Members of Congress in the audience and all the health advocates that fought for so long for this to happen. We hope you feel good about the extraordinary service that you've rendered this country. Thank you very much. Let's go sign the bill.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:04 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Eamon McGoldrick, Christopher E. Wiggins, Sarah L. Wiggins, and Hoai-Nam Ngoc Bui, Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids; and Delegate Donna M. Christensen of the U.S. Virgin Islands. H.R. 1256, approved June 22, was assigned Public Law No. 111–31.

Statement on the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Commuter Train Crash in Washington, DC
June 22, 2009

Michelle and I were saddened by the terrible accident in northeast Washington, DC, today. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families and friends affected by this tragedy. I want to thank the brave first responders who arrived immediately to save lives. My staff has been in touch with Mayor Fenty's office and will continue to monitor the situation.

NOTE: The statement referred to Mayor Adrian M. Fenty of Washington, DC.

Message to the Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to the Western Balkans
June 22, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the Western Balkans emergency is to continue in effect beyond June 26, 2009.

The crisis constituted by the actions of persons engaged in, or assisting, sponsoring, or supporting (i) extremist violence in the Republic of Macedonia and elsewhere in the Western Balkans region, or (ii) acts obstructing implementation of the Dayton Accords in Bosnia or United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 of June 10, 1999, in Kosovo, that led to the declaration of a national emergency on June 26, 2001, in Executive Order 13219, and to amendment of that order in Executive Order 13304 of May 28, 2003, has not been resolved. The acts of extremist violence and obstructionist activity outlined in Executive Order 13219, as amended, are hostile to U.S. interests and pose a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency declared with respect to the Western Balkans and maintain in force the sanctions to respond to this threat.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 22, 2009.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

The President's News Conference
June 23, 2009

The President. Hello, everybody. Good afternoon, everybody. Today I want to start by addressing three issues, and then I'll take your questions.

First, I'd like to say a few words about the situation in Iran. The United States and the international community have been appalled and outraged by the threats, the beatings, and imprisonments of the last few days. I strongly condemn these unjust actions, and I join with the American people in mourning each and every innocent life that is lost.

I've made it clear that the United States respects the sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Iran and is not interfering with Iran's affairs. But we must also bear witness to the courage and the dignity of the Iranian people and to a remarkable opening within Iranian society. And we deplore the violence against innocent civilians anywhere that it takes place.

The Iranian people are trying to have a debate about their future. Some in Iran—some in the Iranian Government, in particular, are trying to avoid that debate by accusing the United States and others in the West of instigating protests over the election. These accusations are patently false. They're an obvious attempt to distract people from what is truly taking place within Iran's borders. This tired strategy of using old tensions to scapegoat other countries won't work anymore in Iran. This is not about the United States or the West; this is about the people of Iran, and the future that they—and only they—will choose.

The Iranian people can speak for themselves. That's precisely what's happened in the last few days. In 2009, no iron fist is strong enough to shut off the world from bearing witness to peaceful protests of justice. Despite the Iranian Government's efforts to expel journalists and isolate itself, powerful images and poignant words have made their way to us through cell phones and computers, and so we've watched what the Iranian people are doing.

This is what we've witnessed. We've seen the timeless dignity of tens of thousands of Iranians marching in silence. We've seen people of all ages risk everything to insist that their votes are counted and that their voices are heard. Above all, we've seen courageous women stand up to the brutality and threats, and we've experienced the searing image of a woman bleeding to death on the streets. While this loss is raw and extraordinarily painful, we also know this: Those who stand up for justice are always on the right side of history.

As I said in Cairo, suppressing ideas never succeeds in making them go away. The Iranian people have a universal right to assembly and free speech. If the Iranian Government seeks the respect of the international community, it must respect those rights and heed the will of its own people. It must govern through consent and not coercion. That's what Iran's own people are calling for, and the Iranian people will ultimately judge the actions of their own Government.

Now, the second issue I want to address is our ongoing effort to build a clean energy economy. This week, the House of Representatives is moving ahead on historic legislation that will transform the way we produce and use energy in America. This legislation will spark a clean energy transformation that will reduce our dependence on foreign oil and confront the carbon pollution that threatens our planet.

This energy bill will create a set of incentives that will spur the development of new sources of energy, including wind, solar, and geothermal power. It will also spur new energy savings, like efficient windows and other materials that reduce heating costs in the winter and cooling costs in the summer. These incentives will finally make clean energy the profitable kind of energy. And that will lead to the development of new technologies that lead to new industries that could create millions of new jobs in America, jobs that can't be shipped overseas.

At a time of great fiscal challenges, this legislation is paid for by the polluters who currently emit the dangerous carbon emissions

that contaminate the water we drink and pollute the air that we breathe. It also provides assistance to businesses and communities as they make the gradual transition to clean energy technologies.

So I believe that this legislation is extraordinarily important for our country; it's taken great effort on the part of many over the course of the past several months. And I want to thank the chair of the Energy and Commerce Committee, Henry Waxman, his colleagues on that committee, including Congressmen Dingell, Ed Markey, and Rick Boucher. I also want to thank Charlie Rangel, the chair of the Ways and Means Committee, and Collin Peterson, the chair of the Agricultural Committee, for their many and ongoing contributions to this process. And I want to express my appreciation to Nancy Pelosi and Steny Hoyer for their leadership.

We all know why this is so important. The nation that leads in the creation of a clean energy economy will be the nation that leads the 21st century's global economy. That's what this legislation seeks to achieve; it's a bill that will open the door to a better future for this Nation. And that's why I urge Members of Congress to come together and pass it.

The last issue I'd like to address is health care. Right now Congress is debating various health care reform proposals. This is obviously a complicated issue, but I am very optimistic about the progress that they're making.

Like energy, this is legislation that must and will be paid for. It will not add to our deficits over the next decade. We will find the money through savings and efficiencies within the health care system, some of which we've already announced.

We will also ensure that the reform we pass brings down the crushing cost of health care. We simply can't have a system where we throw good money after bad habits. We need to control the skyrocketing costs that are driving families, businesses, and our Government into greater and greater debt.

There's no doubt that we must preserve what's best about our health care system, and that means allowing Americans who like their doctor and their health care plans to keep them. But unless we fix what's broken in our current system, everyone's health care will be in jeopardy. Unless we act, premiums will climb higher, benefits will erode further, and the rolls of the uninsured will swell to include millions more Americans. Unless we act, one out of every five dollars that we earn will be spent on health care within a decade. And the amount our Government spends on Medicare and Medicaid will eventually grow larger than what our Government spends on everything else today.

When it comes to health care, the status quo is unsustainable and unacceptable. So reform is not a luxury; it's a necessity. And I hope that Congress will continue to make significant progress on this issue in the weeks ahead.

So let me open it up for questions, and I'll start with you, Jennifer [Jennifer Loven, Associated Press].

Iran

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Your administration has said that the offer to talk to Iran's leaders remains open. Can you say if that's still so, even with all the violence that has been committed by the Government against the peaceful protesters? And if it is, is there any redline that your administration won't cross, where that offer will be shut off?

The President. Well, obviously, what's happened in Iran is profound. And we're still waiting to see how it plays itself out. My position coming into this office has been that the United States has core national security interests in making sure that Iran doesn't possess a nuclear weapon and it stops exporting terrorism outside of its borders.

We have provided a path whereby Iran can reach out to the international community, engage, and become a part of international norms. It is up to them to make a decision as to whether they choose that path. What we've been seeing over the last several days, the last couple of weeks, obviously, is not encouraging, in terms of the path that this regime may choose to take. And the fact that they are now in the midst of an extraordinary debate taking place in Iran may end up coloring how they respond to the international community as a whole.

We are going to monitor and see how this plays itself out before we make any judgments

about how we proceed. But just to reiterate, there is a path available to Iran in which their sovereignty is respected, their traditions, their culture, their faith is respected, but one in which they are part of a larger community that has responsibilities and operates according to norms and international rules that are universal. We don't know how they're going to respond yet, and that's what we're waiting to see.

Q. So should there be consequences for what's happened so far?

The President. I think that the international community is, as I said before, bearing witness to what's taking place. And the Iranian Government should understand that how they handle the dissent within their own country, generated indigenously, internally, from the Iranian people, will help shape the tone not only for Iran's future but also its relationship to other countries.

Since we're on Iran, I know Nico Pitney is here from Huffington Post.

Election in Iran

Q. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. Nico, I know that you—and all across the Internet, we've been seeing a lot of reports coming directly out of Iran. I know that there may actually be questions from people in Iran who are communicating through the Internet. What—do you have a question?

Q. Yes, I did, but I wanted to use this opportunity to ask you a question directly from an Iranian. We solicited questions last night from people who are still courageous enough to be communicating online, and one of them wanted to ask you this: "Under which conditions would you accept the election of Ahmadi-nejad? And if you do accept it without any significant changes in the conditions there, isn't that a betrayal of the—of what the demonstrators there are working towards?"

The President. Well, look, we didn't have international observers on the ground. We can't say definitively what exactly happened at polling places throughout the country. What we know is that a sizeable percentage of the Iranian people themselves, spanning Iranian society, consider this election illegitimate. It's not an isolated instance, a little grumbling here or there. There is significant questions about the legitimacy of the election.

And so, ultimately, the most important thing for the Iranian Government to consider is legitimacy in the eyes of its own people, not in the eyes of the United States. And that's why I've been very clear: Ultimately, this is up to the Iranian people to decide who their leadership is going to be and the structure of their Government.

What we can do is to say unequivocally that there are sets of international norms and principles about violence, about dealing with peaceful dissent that spans cultures, spans borders. And what we've been seeing over the Internet and what we've been seeing in news reports violates those norms and violates those principles. I think it is not too late for the Iranian Government to recognize that there is a peaceful path that will lead to stability and legitimacy and prosperity for the Iranian people. We hope they take it.

Jeff Mason of Reuters.

Financial Regulatory Reform

Q. Right here, sir. Switching gears slightly, in light of the financial regulation and reform that you have made, what is—how do you rate the performance of the Fed in handling the financial crisis? And more specifically, how do you rate the performance of Ben Bernanke, and would you like him to stay on when his term ends in January?

The President. I'm not going to make news about Ben Bernanke—[*laughter*]—although I think he has done a fine job under very difficult circumstances.

I would say that all financial regulators didn't do everything that needed to be done to prevent the crisis from happening. And that's why we've put forward the boldest set of reforms in financial regulation in 75 years, because there were too many gaps; where there were laws on the books that would have brought about a prevention of the crisis, the enforcement wasn't there. In some cases, there just weren't sufficient laws on the books, for example, with the nonbanking sector.

I think that the Fed probably performed better than most other regulators prior to the

crisis taking place, but I think they'd be the first to acknowledge that in dealing with systemic risk and anticipating systemic risk, they didn't do everything that needed to be done.

I think since the crisis has occurred, Ben Bernanke has performed very well. And one of the central concepts behind our financial regulatory reform is that there's got to be somebody who is responsible not just for monitoring the health of individual institutions, but somebody who's monitoring the systemic risks of the system as a whole. And we believe that the Fed has the most technical expertise and the best track record in terms of doing that.

But that's not the only part of financial regulation. One of the things that we're putting a huge amount of emphasis on is the issue of consumer protection, whether it's subprime loans that were given out because nobody was paying attention to what was being peddled to consumers, whether it's how credit cards are handled, how annuities are dealt with, what people can expect in terms of understanding their 401(k)s. There's a whole bunch of financial transactions out there where consumers are not protected the way they should, and that's why we said, we're going to put forward a consumer financial protection agency whose only job it is to focus on those issues.

Now, the Fed was one of the regulators that had some of those consumer responsibilities. We actually think that they're better off focusing on issues of broad systemic risk, and we have just one agency that's focused on the consumer protection side.

Q. But is the Fed getting too powerful?

The President. If you look at what we've proposed, we are not so much expanding the Fed's power as we are focusing what the Fed needs to do to prevent the kinds of crises that are happening again. Another good example is the issue of resolution authority. I think it wasn't that long ago where everybody was properly outraged about AIG and the enormous amounts of money the taxpayers had to put into AIG in order to prevent it from dragging the entire financial system down with it.

Had we had the kinds of resolution authority, the kinds of laws that were in place that would allow a orderly winding down of AIG, then potentially taxpayers could have saved a huge amount of money. We want that power to be available so that taxpayers aren't on the hook. All right?

Major Garrett [FOX News]. Where's Major?

Situation in Iran

Q. Right here, sir. In your opening remarks, sir, you were—you said about Iran that you were appalled and outraged. What took you so long to say those words?

The President. Well, I don't think that's accurate. Track what I've been saying. Right after the election, I said that we had profound concerns about the nature of the election, but that it was not up to us to determine what the outcome was. As soon as violence broke out—in fact, in anticipation of potential violence—we were very clear in saying that violence was unacceptable, that that was not how governments operate with respect to their people.

So we've been entirely consistent, Major, in terms of how we've approached this. My role has been to say, the United States is not going to be a foil for the Iranian Government to try to blame what's happening on the streets of Tehran on the CIA or on the White House, that this is an issue that is led by and given voice to the frustrations of the Iranian people. And so we've been very consistent the first day, and we're going to continue to be consistent in saying, this is not an issue about the United States; this is about an issue of the Iranian people.

What we've also been consistent about is saying that there are some universal principles, including freedom of assembly and freedom of speech, making sure that governments are not using coercion and violence and repression in terms of how they interact with peaceful demonstrators. And we have been speaking out very clearly about that fact.

Iran-U.S. Relations

Q. Are Iranian diplomats still welcome at the Embassy on Fourth of July, sir?

The President. Well, I think as you're aware, Major, we don't have formal diplomatic relations with——

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. We don't have formal diplomatic relations with Iran. I think that we have said that if Iran chooses a path that abides by international norms and principles, then we are interested in healing some of the wounds of 30 years, in terms of U.S.-Iranian relations. But that is a choice that the Iranians are going to have to make.

Q. But the offer still stands?

The President. That's a choice the Iranians are going to have to make.

David Jackson [USA Today].

Health Care Reform

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Two of the key players in the insurance industry, America's Health Insurance Plans and BlueCross BlueShield, sent a letter to the Senate this morning saying that a government health insurance plan would, quote, "dismantle," end quote, private insurers. Why are they wrong? And secondly, this public plan, is this nonnegotiable? Would you sign a health care bill without it?

The President. Well, let's talk first of all about health care reform more broadly. I think in this debate, there's been some notion that if we just stand pat, we're okay. And that's just not true. You know, there are polls out that show that 70 or 80 percent of Americans are satisfied with the health insurance that they currently have. The only problem is that premiums have been doubling every 9 years, going up three times faster than wages. The U.S. Government is not going to be able to afford Medicare and Medicaid on its current trajectory. Businesses are having to make very tough decisions about whether we drop coverage or we further restrict coverage.

So the notion that somehow we can just keep on doing what we're doing and that's okay, that's just not true. We have a longstanding critical problem in our health care system that is pulling down our economy, it's burdening families, it's burdening businesses, and it is the primary driver of our Federal deficits. All right?

So if we start from the premise that the status quo is unacceptable, then that means we're going to have to bring about some serious changes. Now, what I've said is, our top priority has to be to control costs. And that means not just tinkering around the edges. It doesn't mean just lopping off reimbursements for doctors in any given year because we're trying to fix our budget. It means that we look at the kinds of incentives that exist, what our delivery system is like, why it is that some communities are spending 30 percent less than other communities but getting better health care outcomes, and figuring out how can we make sure that everybody is benefiting from lower costs and better quality by improving practices. It means health IT. It means prevention.

So all these things are the starting point, I think, for reform. And I've said very clearly, if any bill arrives from Congress that is not controlling costs, that's not a bill I can support. It's going to have to control costs. It's going to have to be paid for. All right? So there's been a lot of talk about, well, a trillion-dollar price tag. What I've said is, if we're going to spend that much money, then it's going to be largely funded through reallocating dollars that are already in the health care system but aren't being spent well. If we're spending $177 billion over 10 years to subsidize insurance companies under Medicare Advantage, when there's no showing that people are healthier using that program than the regular Medicare program, well, that's not a good deal for taxpayers. And we're going to take that money, and we're going to use it to provide better care at a cheaper cost to the American people. So that's point number one.

Number two, while we are in the process of dealing with the cost issue, I think it's also wise policy and the right thing to do to start providing coverage for people who don't have health insurance or are underinsured, are paying a lot of money for high deductibles. I get letters—two, three letters a day—that I read of families who don't have health insurance, are going bankrupt, are on the brink of losing their insurance, have deductibles that are so high that even with insurance they end up with fifty, a hundred thousand dollars worth of debt, are at risk of losing their homes.

And that has to be part of reform, making sure that even if you've got health insurance

now, you are not worried that when you lose your job or your employer decides to change policies that somehow you're going to be out of luck. I think about the woman who was in Wisconsin that I was with, who introduced me up in Green Bay—36 years old, double mastectomy; breast cancer has now moved to her bones, and she's got two little kids, a husband with a job. They had health insurance, but they're still $50,000 in debt, and she's thinking, my main legacy, if I don't survive this thing, is going to be leaving $100,000 worth of debt. So those are the things that I'm prioritizing.

Now, the public plan, I think, is a important tool to discipline insurance companies. What we've said is, under our proposal, let's have a system the same way that Federal employees do, same way that Members of Congress do, where—we call it an exchange, but you can call it a marketplace—where essentially you've got a whole bunch of different plans. If you like your plan and you like your doctor, you won't have to do a thing. You keep your plan; you keep your doctor. If your employer is providing you good health insurance, terrific; we're not going to mess with it.

But if you're a small-business person, if the insurance that's being offered is something you can't afford, if you want to shop for a better price, then you can go to this exchange, this marketplace, and you can look: Okay, this is how much this plan costs; this is how much that plan costs; this is what the coverage is like; this is what fits for my family. As one of those options, for us to be able to say, here's a public option that's not profit-driven, that can keep down administrative costs, and that provides you good, quality care for a reasonable price—as one of the options for you to choose, I think that makes sense.

Health Care Reform/Medical Insurance Providers

Q. Won't that drive private insurers out of business?

The President. Well, why would it drive private insurers out of business? If private insurers say that the marketplace provides the best quality health care, if they tell us that they're offering a good deal, then why is it that the Government, which they say can't run anything, suddenly is going to drive them out of business? That's not logical.

Now, I think that there's going to be some healthy debates in Congress about the shape that this takes. I think there can be some legitimate concerns on the part of private insurers that if any public plan is simply being subsidized by taxpayers endlessly, that over time they can't compete with the Government just printing money.

So there are going to be some, I think, legitimate debates to be had about how this private plan takes shape. But just conceptually, the notion that all these insurance companies who say they're giving consumers the best possible deal, that they can't compete against a public plan as one option, with consumers making the decision what's the best deal, that defies logic, which is why I think you've seen in the polling data overwhelming support for a public plan. All right?

Q. But is that nonnegotiable?

The President. Chip [Chip Reid, CBS News].

Situation in Iran/U.S. Foreign Policy

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Following up on Major's question, some Republicans on Capitol Hill—John McCain and Lindsey Graham, for example—have said that up to this point, your response on Iran has been timid and weak. Today it sounded a lot stronger. It sounded like the kind of speech John McCain has been urging you to give, saying that "those who stand up for justice are always on the right side of history," referring to an "iron fist" in Iran—"deplore," "appalled," "outraged." Were you influenced at all by John McCain and Lindsey Graham accusing you of being timid and weak?

The President. What do you think? [*Laughter*] Look, the—I think John McCain has genuine passion about many of these international issues, and I think that all of us share a belief that we want justice to prevail. But only I'm the President of the United States, and I've got responsibilities in making certain that we are continually advancing our national security interests and that we are not used as a tool to be exploited by other countries.

I mean, you guys must have seen the reports. They've got some of the comments that I've made being mistranslated in Iran, suggesting that I'm telling rioters to go out and riot some more. There are reports suggesting that the CIA is behind all this, all of which are patently false. But it gives you a sense of the narrative that the Iranian Government would love to play into. So the Members of Congress, they've got their constitutional duties, and I'm sure they will carry them out in the way that they think is appropriate. I'm President of the United States, and I'll carry out my duties as I think are appropriate. All right?

Q. By speaking so strongly today, aren't you giving the leadership in Iran the fodder to make those arguments that it is about the United States?

The President. You know, the truth—look, I mean, I think that we can parse this as much as we want. I think if you look at the statements that I've made, they've been very consistent. I just made a statement on Saturday in which we said we deplored the violence. And so I think that in the hothouse of Washington, there may be all kinds of stuff going back and forth, in terms of Republican critics versus the administration. That's not what is relevant to the Iranian people. What's relevant to them right now is, are they going to have their voices heard?

And frankly, a lot of them aren't paying a lot of attention to what's being said on Capitol Hill and probably aren't spending a lot of time thinking about what's being said here. They're trying to figure out how can they make sure justice is served in Iran.

Q. So there's no news in your statement today?

The President. Chuck Todd [NBC News].

Situation in Iran

Q. Mr. President, I want to follow up on Iran. You have avoided twice spelling out consequences. You've hinted that there would be, from the international community, if they continue to violate—you said violate these norms. You seem to hint that there are human rights violations taking place.

The President. I'm not hinting. I think that when a young woman gets shot on the street when she gets out of her car, that's a problem.

Q. Then why won't you spell out the consequences that the Iranian——

The President. Because I think, Chuck, that we don't know yet how this thing is going to play out. I know everybody here is on a 24-hour news cycle; I'm not. Okay?

Q. But shouldn't—I mean, shouldn't the world and Iran——

The President. Chuck, I answered——

Q. ——but shouldn't the Iranian regime know that there are consequences?

The President. I answered the question, Chuck, which is that we don't yet know how this is going to play out. Okay?

Jake Tapper [ABC News].

Health Care Reform/Medical Insurance Providers

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Before I ask my question, I'm wondering if you could actually answer David's. Is the public plan nonnegotiable?

The President. Well, that's your question. [*Laughter*]

Q. Well, you didn't answer——

The President. You think you're going to—are you the ombudsman for the White House press corps? [*Laughter*] What's your—is that your question? [*Laughter*]

Q. Well, then I have a two-part question. [*Laughter*]

Q. Go for it, Jake.

Q. Is the public plan nonnegotiable? And while I appreciate your Spock-like language about the logic of the health care plan, the public plan, it does seem logical to a lot of people that if the Government is offering a cheaper health care plan, then lots of employers will want to have their employees covered by that cheaper plan, which will not have to be for profit, unlike private plans, and may possibly benefit from some Government subsidies, who knows. And then their employees would be signed up for this public plan, which would violate what you're promising the American people, that they will not have to change

health care plans if they like the plan they have. So——

The President. I got you. You're pitching; I'm catching.

Q. Okay.

The President. I got the question. First of all, was the reference to Spock—is that a crack on my ears? [*Laughter*] All right, I just want to make sure. No?

Q. I would never make fun of your ears, sir. [*Laughter*]

The President. In answer to David's question, which you co-opted, we are still early in this process, so we have not drawn lines in the sand other than that reform has to control costs and that it has to provide relief to people who don't have health insurance or are underinsured. Those are the broad parameters that we've discussed.

There are a whole host of other issues where, ultimately, I may have a strong opinion, and I will express those to Members of Congress as this is shaping up. It's too early to say that. Right now I will say that our position is that a public plan makes sense.

Now, let me go to the broader question you made about the public plan. As I said before, I think that there is a legitimate concern if the public plan was simply eating off the taxpayer trough that it would be hard for private insurers to compete. If, on the other hand, the public plan is structured in such a way where they've got to collect premiums and they've got to provide good services, then if what the insurance companies are saying is true, that they're doing their best to serve their customers, that they're in the business of keeping people well and giving them security when they get sick, they should be able to compete.

Now, if it turns out that the public plan, for example, is able to reduce administrative costs significantly, then you know what? I'd like insurance companies to take note and say, hey, if the public plan can do that, why can't we? And that's good for everybody in the system. And I don't think there should be any objection to that.

Now, by the way, I should point out that part of the reform that we've suggested is that if you want to be a private insurer as part of the exchange, as part of this marketplace, this menu of options that people can choose from, we're going to have some different rules for all insurance companies, one of them being that you can't preclude people from getting health insurance because of a preexisting condition; you can't cherry-pick and just take the healthiest people.

So there are going to be some ground rules that are going to apply to all insurance companies, because I think the American people understand that too often, insurance companies have been spending more time thinking about how to take premiums and then avoid providing people coverage than they have been thinking about how can we make sure that insurance is there, health care is there when families need it.

But I'm confident that if—I take those advocates of the free market to heart when they say that the free market is innovative and is going to compete on service and is going to compete on their ability to deliver good care to families. And if that's the case, then this just becomes one more option. If it's not the case, then I think that that's something that the American people should know.

Q. What about—I'm sorry, but what about keeping your promise to the American people that they won't have to change plans even if employers——

The President. Well, hold on. I mean, when I say if you have your plan and you like it and your doctor has a plan, or you have a doctor and you like your doctor that you don't have to change plans, what I'm saying is, the Government is not going to make you change plans under health reform.

Now, are there going to be employers right now—assuming we don't do anything—let's say that we take the advice of some folks who are out there and say, "Oh, this is not the time to do health care. We can't afford it. It's too complicated. Let's take our time," et cetera. So let's assume that nothing happened. I can guarantee you that there's the possibility for a whole lot of Americans out there that they're not going to end up having the same health care they have, because what's going to happen is, as costs keep on going up, employers are going to start

making decisions: We've got to raise premiums on our employees; in some cases, we can't provide health insurance at all.

And so there are going to be a whole set of changes out there. That's exactly why health reform is so important. Okay.

Margaret [Margaret Talev], from McClatchy. Where's Margaret? There you are.

Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act of 2009

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. As a former smoker, I understand the frustration and the fear that comes with quitting. But with the new law that you signed yesterday regulating the tobacco industry, I'd like to ask you a few questions. How many cigarettes a day——

The President. A few questions? [*Laughter*]

Q. Well, how many cigarettes a day do you now smoke? Do you smoke alone or in the presence of other people? And do you believe the new law would help you to quit? If so, why?

The President. Well, the—first of all, the new law that was put in place is not about me; it's about the next generation of kids coming up. So I think it's fair, Margaret, to just say that you just think it's neat to ask me about my smoking, as opposed to it being relevant to my new law. [*Laughter*] But that's fine.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. I understand. It's an interesting human interest story.

Look, I've said before that, as a former smoker, I constantly struggle with it. Have I fallen off the wagon sometimes? Yes. Am I a daily smoker, a constant smoker? No. I don't do it in front of my kids; I don't do it in front of my family. And I would say that I am 95 percent cured, but there are times where—[*laughter*]—there are times where I mess up. And, I mean, I've said this before. I get this question about once every month or so, and I don't know what to tell you, other than the fact that, like folks who go to AA, once you've gone down this path, then it's something you continually struggle with, which is precisely why the legislation we signed was so important. Because what we don't want is kids going down that path in the first place. Okay?

Macarena Vidal [EFE News]. Yes.

Chile-U.S. Relations

Q. Mr. President, you're meeting today with Chilean President Michelle Bachelet. You're meeting next week with Alvaro Uribe from Colombia. Two months ago in Trinidad, at the Summit of the Americas, you said that—you called on Latin American countries to help you with deeds, not words, particularly towards less democratic countries. Have you noticed any particular progress in these 2 months, and can you give us examples if so?

The President. Well, first of all, I'm very much looking forward to seeing President Bachelet. I think she's one of the finest leaders in Latin America, a very capable person. If you look at how Chile has handled the recession, they've handled it very well, in part because the surpluses that they got when copper prices were very high they set aside. And so they had a—the resources to deal with the downturn. It's a good lesson for the United States. When we had surpluses, they got dissipated.

We think that there's enormous possibilities of making progress in Latin America generally. One of the things that I'll be talking about with President Bachelet is the coordination and cooperation between the United State and Chile on clean energy. We'll have an announcement when we do our press conference after my bilateral meeting on some important clean energy partnerships. We're making important progress when it comes to exchanges on cancer research. We continue to have a robust trade regime with Chile. So—and by the way, Chile has actually entered into some very interesting partnerships, not just with the Federal Government but also with State governments like California.

So I think the relationship that we have with Chile—which, by the way, does not fall in line with U.S. foreign policy on every single issue—but it's a respectful policy. Chile is an important partner. I think that's the model that we want: partnership. The United States doesn't dictate how Chile should view its own interests, but in fact, we've achieved great

cooperation. And I will be looking at President Bachelet giving us further advice in terms of how we can take the kind of relationship we have with Chile and expand that to our relationships throughout Latin America. Okay?

Latin America-U.S. Relations

Q. But my question is not only about Chile, but is about Latin American countries giving you a hand on—against less democratic countries.

The President. Well, the point is, is that I think Chile is leading by example. So I'm using Chile as an example. But the same is true in Brazil, for example. I mean, President Lula came in, and he's got a very different political orientation than most Americans do. He came up through the trade union movement. He was perceived as a strong leftist. It turns out that he was a very practical person, who although maintains relationships across the political spectrum in Latin America, has instituted all sorts of smart market reforms that have made Brazil prosper.

And so if you take a Bachelet or a Lula, and the United States has a good working relationship with them, then I think that points the way for other countries that may be—where the democratic tradition is not as deeply embedded as we'd like it to be. And we can make common cause in showing those countries that, in fact, democracy, respect for property rights, respect for market-based economies, rule of law—that all those things can in fact lead to greater prosperity, that that's not just a U.S. agenda, but that's a smart way to increase the prosperity of your own people. Okay.

Hans Nichols [Bloomberg News]. Hans.

National Economy/Unemployment Rate/American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009/ Domestic Agenda

Q. Yes. Thank you, Mr. President. If I can just return to the economy more generally, when you were selling the economic stimulus package, you talked and your advisers and economists talked about keeping unemployment below 8 percent. And yet last week, you acknowledged that unemployment is likely to reach double digits, being 10 percent.

The President. Right.

Q. Do you think you need a second stimulus package?

The President. Well, not yet, because I think it's important to see how the economy evolves and how effective the first stimulus is. I think it's fair to say that—keep in mind the stimulus package was the first thing we did, and we did it a couple of weeks after Inauguration. At that point, nobody understood what the depths of this recession were going to look like. If you recall, it was only significantly later that we suddenly get a report that the economy had tanked.

And so it's not surprising then that we missed the mark in terms of our estimates of where unemployment would go. I think it's pretty clear now that unemployment will end up going over 10 percent, if you just look at the pattern, because of the fact that even after employers and businesses start investing again and start hiring again, typically it takes a while for that employment number to catch up with economic recovery. And we're still not at actual recovery yet. So I anticipate that this is going to be a difficult year, a difficult period.

Q. What's the high watermark, then, for unemployment? Eleven percent?

The President. Well, I'm not suggesting that I have a crystal ball. Since you just threw back at us our last prognosis, let's not engage in another one.

Q. Does that mean you won't be making predictions ever? [*Laughter*]

The President. But what I am saying is that here are some things I know for certain. In the absence of the stimulus, I think our recession would be much worse. It would have declined—without the Recovery Act, we know for a fact that States, for example, would have laid off a lot more teachers, a lot more police officers, a lot more firefighters—every single one of those individuals whose jobs were saved. As a consequence, they are still making their mortgage payments, they are still shopping. So we know that the Recovery Act has had an impact.

Now, what we also know is this was the worst recession since the Great Depression, and people are going through a very tough time right

now. And I don't expect them to be satisfied. I mean, one thing that—as I sometimes glance at the various news outlets represented here, I know that they're sometimes reporting of, oh, the administration is worried about this, or their poll numbers are going down there, or this—look, the American people have a right to feel like this is a tough time right now. What's incredible to me is how resilient the American people have been and how they are still more optimistic than the facts alone would justify, because this is a tough, tough period.

And I don't feel satisfied with the progress that we've made. We've got to get our Recovery Act money out faster. We've got to make sure that the programs that we've put in place are working the way they're supposed to. I think, for example, our mortgage program has actually helped to modify mortgages for a lot of people, but it hasn't been keeping pace with all the foreclosures that are taking place. I get letters every day from people who say, "You know, I appreciate that you put out this mortgage program, but the bank is still not letting me modify my mortgage, and I'm about to lose my home." And then I've got to call my staff and team and find out why isn't it working for these folks, and can we adjust it, can we tweak it, can we make it more aggressive.

This is a very, very difficult process. And what I've got to do is to make sure that we're focused both on the short term, how can we provide families immediate relief and jumpstart the economy as quickly as possible. And I've got to keep my eye on the long term, and the long term is making sure that by reforming our health care system, by passing serious energy legislation that makes us a clean energy economy, by revamping our education system, by finally getting the financial regulatory reforms in place that are necessary for the 21st century—by doing all those things, we've got a foundation for long-term economic growth, and we don't end up having to juice up the economy artificially through the kinds of bubble strategies that helped to get us in the situation that we're in today. Okay?

I've got time for two more questions. April [April Ryan, American Urban Radio]—where's April?

National Economy/Unemployment Rate/Education Programs

Q. Right here. [*Laughter*] How are you doing?

The President. There you are. How are you?

Q. I'm fine. Back on the economy, Mr. President, people are criticizing this road to recovery plan. Specifically, there were reports in the Washington Post that say that the African America unemployment rate will go to 20 percent by the end of this year. And then you had your Chairman of Economic Advisers say the target intervention may come next year if nothing changes. Why not target intervention now to stop the bloodletting in the black unemployment rate?

The President. Well, look, the—first of all, we know that when—the African American unemployment rate, the Latino unemployment rate, are consistently higher than the national average. And so if the economy as a whole is doing poorly, then you know that the African American community is going to be doing poorly, and they're going to be hit even harder. And the best thing that I can do for the African American community or the Latino community or the Asian community, whatever community, is to get the economy as a whole moving. If I don't—hold on one second; let me answer the question—if I don't do that, then I'm not going to be able to help anybody. So that's priority number one.

It is true that in certain inner-city communities, the unemployment rate is—was already sky high even before this recession. The ladders available for people to enter into the job market are even worse. And so we are interested in looking at proven programs that help people on a pathway to jobs.

There was a reason why right before Father's Day I went to a program here locally in Washington called Year Up, which has a proven track record of taking young, mostly minority people, some of whom have graduated from high school, some maybe who've just gotten their GED, and trained them on computers and provide them other technical skills, but also train them on how to carry themselves in an office, how to write an e-mail—some of the

social skills that will allow them to be more employable. They've got a terrific placement rate after this 1-year program. If there are ways that we can potentially duplicate some of those programs, then we're going to do so.

So part of what we want to do is to find tools that will give people more opportunity. But the most important thing I can do is to lift the economy overall, and that's what my strategy is focused on.

Q. But what about the criticism that this isn't targeted enough?

The President. All right, last question. Suzanne [Suzanne Malveaux, Cable News Network].

Situation in Iran

Q. Thank you. Back to Iran, putting a human face on this—over the weekend, we saw a shocking video of this woman, Neda, who had been shot in the chest——

The President. Right. I mentioned her already.

Q. ——and bled to death. Have you seen this video?

The President. I have.

Q. What is your reaction?

The President. It's heartbreaking. It's heartbreaking, and I think that anybody who sees it knows that there's something fundamentally unjust about that.

Q. We also have people on the ground who have been seeing that the streets are quieter now and that is because they feel that they're paralyzed by fear, fear of people gone missing, fear of violence, that perhaps this is a movement that's gone underground or perhaps is dying. Do you have any concern over that?

The President. Yes. I have concern about how peaceful demonstrators and people who want their votes counted may be stifled from expressing those concerns. I think, as I said before, there are certain international norms of freedom of speech, freedom of expression——

Q. Then why won't you allow the photos from the guards?

The President. Hold on a second, Helen [Helen Thomas, Hearst Newspapers]. That's a different question. [*Laughter*] And I think it's important for us to make sure that we let the Iranian people know that we are watching what's happening, that they are not alone in this process. Ultimately, though, what's going to be most important is what happens in Iran. And we've all been struck by the courage of people. And I mentioned this, I think, in a statement that I made a couple of days ago. Some of you who had been covering my campaigns know this is one of my favorite expressions, was Dr. King's expression that "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." We have to believe that ultimately justice will prevail.

Q. May I ask a question about Afghanistan? No questions about Iraq or Afghanistan, sir?

The President. All right. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 12:30 p.m. in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Neda Agha-Soltan, an Iranian citizen who was fatally shot on June 20 in Tehran, Iran, during a Presidential election protest demonstration; cancer patient Laura Klitzka, her husband Pete, and their children Taylor and Logan; President Michelle Bachelet Jeria of Chile; and President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil. Reporters referred to President Mahmud Ahmadi-nejad of Iran; President Alvaro Uribe Velez of Colombia; and Christina D. Romer, Chair, Council of Economic Advisers. The Office of the Press Secretary also released Persian and Arabic language transcripts of the President's opening remarks.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Michelle Bachelet Jeria of Chile and an Exchange With Reporters
June 23, 2009

President Obama. Well, I want to thank President Bachelet for taking the time to visit with me today. We had a chance to get to know each other at the Summit of the Americas, and we've spoken on the phone repeatedly. I find her one of the most compelling leaders that we have,

not just in the hemisphere but around the world. And I congratulate her and her entire team for managing the Chilean economy and the political process in Chile in such a excellent fashion, and I think she's doing an outstanding job.

Obviously, the friendship between the United States and Chile is strong. We have very strong commercial ties, in part because of the free trade agreement that exists between Chile and the United States. One of the things that we've discussed here is how we can continually deepen that relationship. So we are announcing cooperative projects on clean energy. There is enormous interest both in the United States and in Chile in how we can develop solar power and wind power and biofuels and a whole host of other clean energy strategies that will make the people of both countries more prosperous and less dependent on imported energy needs. So we are going to be starting a cooperative project in Chile on this issue.

In addition, we think that there is tremendous possibilities for cooperation on science and technology and—so a specific project that we've discussed is a cancer research center that can help us make progress on that deadly disease.

More broadly, I look to President Bachelet for good advice and good counsel in terms of how the United States can continue to build a strong relationship with all of Latin America. And I think the good progress that we began to make at the Summit of the Americas can be built on with some very concrete steps in the months and years to come. We consider Chile to be one of our most important partners in that process. And so I expect that in the months to come we'll be working very closely together.

The last point I would make is—and I mentioned this, actually, at my press conference with the White House correspondents—I think Chile is to be congratulated on having managed their economy and their fiscal surpluses during good times in such a way that they are now—have now been able to manage the bad times in a good way. And I think that it's an example for all of us that good fiscal policy, good economic policy, ultimately, allows for prosperity through good times and bad times.

And I think that as we move forward in some of the global discussions around how to respond to the deep recession that the world is going through, that we look to countries like Chile to underscore the fact that no matter how big or small the country is, good economic policies can help grow the economy throughout the world.

So we're very grateful to you for your visit, we're glad that you're going to be here for a couple of days, and I look forward to returning the favor by visiting Chile sometime soon.

President Bachelet. Thank you very much, President Obama. As you say, we have had a wonderful conversation and it is because we feel that we are so close to the way President Obama's administration is understanding the world, its challenges, and how to build relations with—[*inaudible*]—with the countries of Latin America.

Of course, he is an idol in our country. I mean, everybody was so enthusiastic about this meeting. And so—and that is because of real reasons, because we understand that the way you are developing your leadership is one who inspire us and makes us feel very comfortable and very confident too.

And we have congratulated President Obama because of all its foreign policy, all of its efforts to not only nationally but also internationally have a good response to the economic crisis. We have been exchanging point of view on how we can also be part of the solution in the Latin American region to cope with—to respond to this economic crisis, how to assure that the countries of Latin America can have the capitals—the flows of capital that they need in order to recover the economy, and be able to tackle challenges like poverty, like health problems, and educational problems, and so on.

And of course, he already mentioned that we have been signing today, earlier today, this cooperation and a memoranda through energy, and we are really enthusiastic about clean energy as we share the idea that the crisis should be responded—also trying to tackle

with climate change issues. And green—clean energy will be a very important, I would say, a support in this direction. Chile has great conditions for solar energy and some others, so we are really enthusiastic about these common efforts.

We will continue, also, with other initiatives like Chile-California plan, like equal opportunities plan where lots of Chileans have come into United States to make master degrees, postgraduate studies to help with Chile's development. And also, Chile is willing to be a very good partner of the United States in this cooperation within the region so we can have a closer relation with the United States and all the Latin American countries.

And, well, we're also are working on health in cancer, but also, we have been working with the people—with the CDC regarding the human flu, and I think it will be very important also for the United States, because when—in autumn, there will be another—probably another wave of human flu. Whatever is learned from Chile, we have good, good diagnostic capacities, good registration capacity, will be upheld for future treatments here in the United States, for vaccine use and so on.

President Obama. And since the President is a doctor, you can take her word for it. That's very helpful.

All right, guys. Thank you, guys. Thank you very much.

Q. Just two questions, Mr. President——

White House Press Office Assistant Benjamin N. Finkenbinder. Thank you, guys. This way——

President Obama. All right. You know what? Actually, Ben, I'm going to make an exception.

Q. From the Chilean press, please?

The President. We'll get one question from the Chilean press. How's that?

Chile-U.S. Relations/U.S. Foreign Policy

Q. Wonderful.

The President. Go ahead.

Q. Mr. President, yes, I'd like to ask you, I realize that your agenda is moving forward. But, inevitably, I'd like to ask you, President Bachelet, in a previous trip to United States, made echo of an old joke: "There's never been a coup d'etat in the United States, because there's no American embassy." The point being that almost——

President Bachelet. That was a joke from an American guy. [*Laughter*] I just said it was a good joke.

President Obama. Yes, it is. [*Laughter*]

Q. The point being that almost no Latin American nation has been free from CIA—bloody CIA intervention, Chile being a prime example, President Bachelet being one of its victims. Is it time for a historical apology?

President Obama. Well, look, I think you answered your own question right at the beginning, which is, I'm interested in going forward, not looking backward. I think that the United States has been an enormous force for good in the world. I think there have been times where we've made mistakes. But I think that what is important is looking at what our policies are today and what my administration intends to do in cooperating with the region.

And I was very clear in Trinidad and Tobago at the Summit of the Americas that we are interested in a partnership in which we are focused on, how can we improve the day-to-day living standards of ordinary people? And that that focus on human development is one that transcends boundaries, should transcend ideologies. I don't have a litmus test in terms of, you know, whether a government is center-right, center-left, this or that. My approach is, if the United States is working together with a country to promote the well-being, the health, the education, the economic opportunities of people in both countries, then we're going to have a good relationship. And I'm confident that we are moving in that direction, and I think that Chile is going to be an excellent partner in that process.

As President Bachelet mentioned—you know, I think this—the flu situation is a good example of what the 21st century is going to look like. There are no borders on the flu. This is not an American problem or a Mexican problem or a Chilean problem; this is a world problem. And given that the flu season is happening now in the Southern Hemisphere, if we get good information and we're both assisting countries in the Southern Hemisphere, but also

learning from the data that is being generated, that will then help the people of the United States. And it's a good metaphor, I think, for a whole range of issues, from climate change to poverty to terrorism, whatever the issue. So many of these issues now cross borders. We can't look at them in isolation, and that, I think, is going to be the basis for a strong working relationship in the future.

So thank you.

The President's Visit to Chile

Q. Last question. There is—there is in Latin America clearly——

Q. When are you coming to Chile?

President Obama. Sorry, everybody is——

Q. When are you coming to Chile? When are you——

President Obama. I'm looking forward to coming soon.

Chilean Press Corps

Q. President Obama, can you take a photograph with the Chilean press, please?

President Obama. A photograph with the press?

Q. Yes.

Q. Yes.

President Obama. Okay. Why don't we go outside?

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:22 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Remarks Following a Meeting on Health Care Reform and an Exchange With Reporters
June 24, 2009

The President. All right. We all set? Well, I just wanted to thank the Governors that are represented here today, Governor Rounds, Gregoire, Douglas, Granholm, and Doyle. They are representative of the bipartisan group of Governors that hosted roundtables around the country on health care after some initial meetings that I had with the National Governors Association, in which every single Governor—Republican or Democrat; small State, big State—emphasized how important it was to reform our health care system to control costs, to assure choice of doctors and plans for individuals, and to make sure that we are providing high-quality care.

And all of them represent States that have done some terrific work, wonderful experiments, have seen successes. But all of these Governors also expressed to me, and I think heard from their constituencies, deep concerns about what the future holds. I think there's a recognition that when you have premiums doubling three times faster than wages, when you have businesses seeing 25- or 30-percent increases in terms of their health care costs for their employees, when you look at Medicaid budgets and what that's forcing Governors to do in terms of making choices about trying to still fund higher education and the other things that are going to make States competitive, there's a recognition that we have to change the status quo.

And so they've reported back to me. There's no perfect unanimity across the table in terms of every single aspect of reform. I think everybody here wants to make sure that Governors have flexibility, that they have input into how legislation is being shaped on the Hill. But they have done my administration and, I think, the American people a terrific service in bringing some of these individual stories to us. And we're committed to working with them in the weeks and months to come to make sure that when we get health reform done, it is in partnership with the States where the rubber so often hits the road.

And one of the advantages they have, as Joe Biden put it, they've planted a mole inside our administration. [*Laughter*] Kathleen Sebelius, very recently a Governor, knows exactly what all of them are struggling with, and she and Nancy-Ann are going to be interacting with

them on a regular basis as we move this agenda forward.

So I want to thank them publicly. And I look forward to working with them to get this done for the American people and for the people of their respective States in the weeks to come.

Thank you. All right guys.

Health Care Reform

Q. Is there any give in your deadline, Mr. President?

The President. We need to get it done.

Q. This year?

The President. We need to get it done this year.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:56 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. M. Michael Rounds of South Dakota; Gov. Christine O. Gregoire of Washington; Gov. James H. Douglas of Vermont; Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm of Michigan; Gov. James E. Doyle of Wisconsin; Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius; and Nancy-Ann DeParle, Director, White House Office of Health Reform.

Statement on Signing the Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2009
June 24, 2009

I want to thank the Members of Congress who put politics aside and stood up to support a bill that will provide for the safety of our troops and the American people. This legislation will make available the funding necessary to bring the war in Iraq to a responsible end, defeat terrorist networks in Afghanistan, and further prepare our Nation in the event of a continued outbreak of the H1N1 pandemic flu.

NOTE: H.R. 2346, approved June 24, was assigned Public Law No. 111–32.

Message to Congress on Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to North Korea
June 24, 2009

To the Congress of the United States:

Section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. 1622(d)) provides for the automatic termination of a national emergency unless, prior to the anniversary date of its declaration, the President publishes in the *Federal Register* and transmits to the Congress a notice stating that the emergency is to continue in effect beyond the anniversary date. In accordance with this provision, I have sent to the *Federal Register* for publication the enclosed notice stating that the national emergency, declared in Executive Order 13466 of June 26, 2008, is to continue in effect beyond June 26, 2009.

The current existence and risk of the proliferation of weapons-usable fissile material on the Korean Peninsula constitute a continuing unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States. For these reasons, I have determined that it is necessary to continue the national emergency and maintain certain restrictions with respect to North Korea and North Korean nationals that would otherwise have been lifted in Proclamation 8271 of June 26, 2008.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 24, 2009.

NOTE: The notice is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at ABC's "Prescription for America" Town Hall Meeting and a Question-and-Answer Session
June 24, 2009

Charles Gibson. Good evening. Diane and I are delighted that you could join us this evening. We are going to be talking about what will be the number-one subject for public discourse all through this summer, and that is health care reform.

Diane Sawyer. The President has said it's a ticking time bomb at the center of the American economy. And so we have gathered 164 people in the East Room of the White House tonight. They're from all over the country, all walks of life, on the frontlines of health care in America; they are doctors, businessmen, patients, Republicans, Democrats, independents. And we know we can't cover every question tonight, but we're going to get the conversation started.

Mr. Gibson. They will be questioning the President, as will we. And we think by the end of the evening you will have a pretty good sense of what the parameters of this debate are, just what's at stake for each of you and for the country as a whole, because this will be discussed, as we said, all through the summer in the Congress. It will be discussed, I think, also in your living room. Every family I think will be debating this.

So with that as preface, we want to thank the President for giving us his parlor and his living room tonight to do this broadcast.

The President. Thank you so much, Charlie. It's wonderful to see you.

Mr. Gibson. Mr. President, I think this is going to be an interesting evening.

The President. Thank you so much, Diane.

Ms. Sawyer. Mr. President, thank you.

The President. Grateful to have you.

Ms. Sawyer. While we head into the East Room, we're going to have the audience waiting for us there. Dr. Tim Johnson, who is our medical editor, is going to give everyone a sense of some of the key questions. We're heading to the East Room.

The President. All right.

[*At this point, there was a break in the town hall meeting.*]

G. Tim Johnson. First, access and choice: The President constantly stresses that if you like what you have, you can keep it. But he also wants to offer more choice and competition with a one-stop shopping list of approved private insurance plans through a so-called Health Insurance Exchange. So far, he has also insisted that a public option be one of the choices. It has sometimes been described as Medicare-like, meaning the Government would be involved with the financing, but patients would be able to choose their own doctors and hospitals.

He says this public option would keep the pressure on private insurance to hold down costs. Critics say Government's advantages—easy funding, huge bargaining power—would eventually put private insurers out of business, which could affect your current coverage.

Second, effective treatment: The President agrees with experts who say that about a third of what we now spend on health care is unnecessary. He says we reward doctors and hospitals the wrong way, paying for simply doing more tests and procedures, rather than paying for good outcomes. And he stresses that primary care—readily available family doctors, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners—is essential in promoting prevention, making sure we get screening tests and lifestyle advice, and coordination, orchestrating the care of specialists and home care for chronic diseases.

Critics say that if third-party Government experts set the rules for what is covered and paid for, patients and doctors will have less of a voice and choice.

And finally, cost control: The President insists that increasing coverage without controlling costs is a formula for economic disaster. That would be a tough job, given that estimates for reform now run between one and

two trillion dollars over 10 years. Besides savings from the reform of Medicare and Medicaid, he has advocated new tax revenue by limiting deductions for charitable giving, but he has not yet agreed to taxing any insurance benefits from employers as income.

Critics say his plan spends too much and the Government just does not have the money. So, Diane and Charlie, three huge challenges, a formula for heartburn, which, by the way, is something we doctors can fix. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Gibson. Dr. Tim Johnson there, outlining some of the parameters of the debate. And we're going to try to loosely organize things. We have this—we're calling this "Prescription of America," but basically, this is: How does this affect me? How does it affect all of you at the doctor's office? Should there be a public option, public Government insurance in all of this? And what is the cost of all of this? Can we afford it?

And as we mentioned, 164 people here from all walks of life, Mr. President. Before we start, I'm curious, I want to get a show of hand. How many of you—whether you agree with the President's approach or not—how many of you agree that we need to change the health care system in America? And is there anybody here who believes the system should be left unchanged? Interesting. But there is a lot of disagreement, because the devil is in the details, as we all know.

The President. No, let's stop now. Let's go. We're ready to—[*laughter*].

Mr. Gibson. So as we say, all of this is: How does this affect me? And we want to get to your questions, and I want to start with Dr. Orrin Devinsky. Is he here? Dr. Devinsky.

Quality Health Care

Q. Yes, in the past, politicians who have sought to reform health care have tried to limit costs by reducing tests, access to specialists. But they've not been good at taking their own medicine. When they or their family members get sick, they often get extremely expensive evaluations and expert care. If a national health plan was approved and your family participated—and, President Obama, if your wife or your daughter became seriously ill, and things were not going well, and the plan physicians told you they were doing everything that reasonably could be done, and you sought out opinions from some medical leaders in major centers, and they said there's another option that you should pursue, but it was not covered in the plan, would you potentially sacrifice the health of your family for the greater good of insuring millions, or would you do everything you possibly could as a father and husband to get the best health care and outcome for your family?

The President. Well, first of all, doctor, I think it's a terrific question, and it's something that touches us all personally, especially when you start talking about end-of-life care. As some of you know, my grandmother recently passed away, which was a very painful thing for me. She's somebody who helped raise me. But she's somebody who contracted what was diagnosed as terminal cancer; there was unanimity about that. They expected that she'd have 6 to 9 months to life. She fell and broke her hip. And then the question was, does she get hip replacement surgery, even though she was fragile enough that they weren't sure how long she would last, whether she could get through the surgery?

I think families all across America are going through decisions like that all the time. And you're absolutely right that if it's my family member, if it's my wife, if it's my children, if it's my grandmother, I always want them to get the very best care.

But here's the problem that we have in our current health care system, is that there is a whole bunch of care that's being provided that every study, every bit of evidence that we have, indicates may not be making us healthier.

Mr. Gibson. But you don't know what that test is.

The President. Well, oftentimes we do, though. There are going to be situations where there are going to be disagreements around—among experts. But oftentimes we do know what makes sense and what doesn't. And this is just one aspect of what is a broader issue.

And if I could just pull back just for a second, understand that the status quo is untenable, which is why you saw—even though we've got Republicans, Democrats, independents, people from all parts of the health care sector

represented here, everybody understands we can't keep doing what we're doing. It is bankrupting families. I get letters every single day from people who've worked hard and don't have health insurance. It is bankrupting businesses who are frustrated that they can't provide the same kind of insurance that they used to provide to their employees. And it's bankrupting our government at the State and Federal levels.

So we know things are going to have to change. One aspect of it the doctor identified is, can we come up with ways that don't prevent people from getting the care they need, but also make sure that—because of all kinds of skewed incentives, we are getting a lot of quantity of care, but we're not getting the kind of quality that we need.

Overtreatment

Ms. Sawyer. I want to ask about this, Mr. President, because you said to me when we talked yesterday that you think if everyone has the right information, that doctors will make the right decisions, patients will make the right decisions, and you just said we think we do know what is overtreatment or not. Dr. John Corboy, from Colorado, do we always know? And what if a patient comes to you and says, "No, I want that extra CAT scan. I think I need that extra CAT scan," and you're at the risk of being sued, among other things? What are you going to do?

Q. Well, I think you still have to provide the appropriate care, and I think we all know that there is a significant amount of care that actually is inappropriate and unnecessary. And the question then is, for you, Mr. President, is what can you convince—what can you do to convince the American public that there actually are limits to what we can pay for with our American health care system? And if there are going to be limits, who is going to design the system, and who is going to enforce the rules for a system like that?

The President. Well, you're asking the right question. And let me say, first of all, this is not an easy problem. If it was easy, it would have been solved a long time ago, because we've been talking about this for decades. Since Harry Truman, we've been talking about how do we provide care that is high quality, gives people choices, and how can we come up with a uniquely American plan, because one of the ideological debates that I think has prevented us from making progress is some people say this is socialized medicine; others say we need a completely free market system. We need to come up with something that is uniquely American.

Now, what I've said is that if we are smart, we should be able to design a system in which people still have choices of doctors and choices of plans, that makes sure that the necessary treatment is provided but we don't have a huge amount of waste in the system, that we are providing adequate coverage for all people, and that we are driving down costs over the long term.

If we don't drive down costs, then we're not going to be able to achieve all those other things. And I think that on the issue that's already been raised by the two doctors, the issue of evidence-based care, I have great confidence that doctors are going to always want to do the right thing for their patients if they've got good information and if their payment incentives are not such that it actually costs them money to provide the appropriate care.

And right now what we have is a situation. Because doctors are paid fee-for-service and there are all sorts of rules governing how they operate, as a consequence, oftentimes it is harder for them, more expensive for them to do what is appropriate. And we should change those incentive structures.

Well-Managed Health Care Systems

Mr. Gibson. And people, I think, understand that you want to get away from quantity for quantity's sake, because that's the way the doctor makes more money, and get to quality. But the question is, how do you do that? How do you get to the point and still assure people—as both of the doctors have asked—that their cousins, their nephews, their husbands, their wives are going to get everything that is necessary?

The President. Well, let's take an example. And I—they may be represented here, I

wasn't sure. But the Mayo Clinic, everybody has heard of it; it's got some of the best quality care in the world; people fly from all over the world to Rochester, Minnesota, in order to get outstanding care. It turns out that Mayo Clinic oftentimes provides care that is as much as one-third less expensive than the average that's provided or in—or some other health care systems that aren't doing as good of a job.

Now, why is that? Well, part of it is that they have set up teams that work together so that if you go first to your primary care physician and they order a test, you don't then have to duplicate having two more tests with other specialists because they were in the room when you first met with that primary care physician. They know how to manage chronic diseases in an effective way, so that we have people who are getting regular checkups, if they're trying to manage diabetes, as opposed to us paying for a $30,000 foot amputation because we didn't manage the disease properly.

So they are doing all kinds of smart things that we could easily duplicate across the system, but we don't. And our job in this summer and this fall—and which I think everybody understands we've got to move in a different direction—is to identify the best ways to achieve the best possible care in a way that controls costs and is affordable for the American economy long term.

Government Involvement in Health Care

Ms. Sawyer. Mr. President, you mentioned Mayo Clinic—and I'm going to cross as I talk here, if you don't mind—but I've been reading a lot of the e-mail questions that we've been getting online. They've been saying the Mayo Clinic is exactly the point; they're doing it.

The President. Right.

Ms. Sawyer. Private industry is doing it. Private hospitals are doing it. The Safeway Company is taking action. Why get the Government involved in something that is being done already in the private sector and with the right initiative and impetus could be done in the private sector without Government involvement?

The President. Well, you just said with the "right initiative," and unfortunately, that initiative hasn't been forthcoming. And as a consequence, what's happening is—see, here's what happening to ordinary families—because I know one of those boxes was, "How does this affect you?"

The average family has seen their premiums double in the last 9 years. Costs for families are going up three times faster than wages. So if you're happy with your health care right now—and many people are happy with their health care right now—the problem is, 10 years from now, you're not going to be happy because it's going to cost twice as much or three times as much as it does right now. Out-of-pocket expenses have gone up 62 percent. Businesses increasingly are having to cut back on health care or—and if you talk to ordinary workers, they're seeing this all the time—employers, even if they don't want to, are having to pass on costs to others.

So unfortunately, whatever it is that we're doing right now isn't working, Diane. What we see is great examples of outstanding care, businesses that are working with their employees on prevention, but it's not spreading through the system. And unfortunately, Government, whether you like it or not, is going to already be involved. We pay for Medicare; we pay for Medicaid. There are a whole host of rules, both at the State and Federal level, governing how health care is administered.

And so the key is for us to try to figure out how do we take that involvement not to completely replace what we have but to build on what works and stop doing what doesn't work. And I think that we can do that through a serious health care reform initiative.

Mr. Gibson. But you say we have to figure out how to do that. Don't we have to do that first, "figure out," so people have a good sense that my medical care is going to be sufficient for me? That's what people are afraid of, that they're not going to get——

The President. Well, absolutely, people are afraid of it. People are concerned. They know that they're living with the devil, but the devil they know, they think, may be better than the devil they don't. And that's understandable. Look, every time we've made progress in this country on health care, there has been a vigorous debate. Senior citizens love Medicare now,

but there was a big debate about whether we could set up Medicare. Children's Health Insurance Program, which provides millions of children health care across this country, that was a big debate.

So there's—these things are always going to be tough politically. Let me tell you, though, that we actually do know, in a lot of instances, what works and what doesn't. What's lacking is not knowledge. We've been debating this stuff for decades. What's lacking is political will. And that's what I'm hoping the American people provide, because genuine change generally does not come from Washington. Whether we like it or not, it comes from the American people saying, it's time for us to move forward. And I think this is that moment.

Primary Care Providers

Ms. Sawyer. And when we come back, Mr. President, from the break, we're going to be talking more about the centerpiece of this in many ways, primary care doctors and providers, and I'm going to turn to Hershaw Davis here, who's a nursing student and also an emergency tech at Johns Hopkins. Stand up, if you will. Because how bad is the shortage out there?

Q. It's bad, sir. Currently our patient load is increasing due to patients not having access either to insurance or primary care. And I want to ask, what's the administration going to do to place primary care providers—physician and nurse practitioners—back in the community so the ER is not America's source of primary care?

Mr. Gibson. All right, let's leave that question on the table.

Ms. Sawyer. On the table.

Mr. Gibson. We'll give you a second to think about the answer, and we'll take a commercial break. Be right back.

[*There was a break in the town hall meeting.*]

Mr. Gibson. Mr. President, before we went to break, Hershaw Davis raised what is an elemental question, which is, any kind of new system needs to be built around primary care and not all the specialists with all the tests, but primary care physicians who can then farm you out, in effect. So how do we reorient the system very quickly to get better primary care and more primary care?

The President. Well, first of all, we need more people like Hershaw who are going to school and committed to the kind of primary care that's going to be critical to us bringing down costs and improving quality. We're not going to be able to do it overnight. Obviously, training physicians, training nurse practitioners, that takes years of work. But what we can do immediately is start changing some of the incentives around what it takes to become a family physician.

Right now if you want to go into medicine, it is much more lucrative for you to go into a specialty. Now, we want terrific specialists, and one of the great things about the American medical system is we have wonderful specialists and they do extraordinary work. But, increasingly, medical students are having to make decisions based on the fact that they're coming out with $200,000 worth of loans. And if they become a primary care physician, oftentimes they are going to make substantially less money, and it's going to be much harder for them to repay their loans.

So what we've done in the Recovery Act, we started by seeing if we could provide additional incentives for people who wanted to go into primary care; some loan forgiveness programs, I think, are going to be very important. But what we're also going to have to do is start looking at Medicare reimbursements, Medicaid reimbursements, working with doctors, working with nurses to figure out how can we incentivize quality of care, a team approach to care, that will help raise and elevate the profile of family care physicians and nurses as opposed to just the specialists who are typically going to make more money if they're getting paid fee-for-service.

Cost of Medical School

Mr. Gibson. Is Mary Vigil in the room? Mary Vigil. There you are. You're a medical student, right, coming out? And how much debt will you—can we get a microphone to Mary? How much debt will you have?

Q. I'll be in about $300,000 in medical education debt.

The President. That's serious money.

Mr. Gibson. And you would like to go into primary care?

Q. Definitely. That was my primary motivation in going into medical school.

Mr. Gibson. But you will—know you will be remunerated at a lesser level than a specialist.

Q. Yes.

The President. Right. And so one of the things that we've got to figure out is how to change that calculation. Now, you may still go into primary care, and I hope you do. But I don't want to make it tougher for you; I want to make it easier for you. And one of the things that I'd like to explore—and I've been working with the administration and with Congress is—are their loan forgiveness programs where people commit to a certain number of years of primary care. That reduces the costs for their medical education. That would make a significant difference.

Increasing the Number of Doctors and Nurses

Mr. Gibson. But let me ask a basic question, which may sound silly and naive. But we've got 46 million people who are uninsured in this country.

The President. Right.

Mr. Gibson. And one of your goals, one of the goals of health care reform is to get those 46 million people insured.

The President. Right.

Mr. Gibson. We only have X number of doctors in the country. If you add 46 million people to the insurance rolls—you can't get an appointment now, Mr. President—how are you going to get an appointment then, when there's 46 more million people competing for that doctor's time?

The President. Well, this is going to be a significant issue. First of all, I think it's important that whatever we do, we're going to phase it in; it's not going to happen overnight.

If we provide the right incentives I think we're going to start seeing more young people say that going into medicine is a satisfying, fulfilling profession, especially if we can eliminate some of the paperwork and bureaucracy that they have to deal with right now. And I don't—I have a lot of friends who are doctors, and they complain to me all the time about the administrative and business sides of the practice, when they actually got into medicine because they wanted to heal people.

But I also think that one of the big potential areas where we can make progress is what Hershaw talked about, and that is, how can we get nurses involved in more effective ways? If you look at what's happening in some States, like Massachusetts, where they tried to create a universal system—and they haven't quite gotten there yet—they have had a problem with an overload of patients.

But one of the areas where we can potentially see some savings is a lot of those patients are being seen in the emergency room anyway, and if we are increasing prevention, if we are increasing wellness programs, we're reducing the amount of emergency room care; then that frees up doctors and resources to provide the kind of primary care that will keep people healthier, but also allow them to see more patients and, hopefully, give more time to patients as well.

Individual Health Care Decisions

Ms. Sawyer. I want to turn to someone who thinks we should follow up on what we were talking about a while back, namely about in some way reducing the vicious cycle of lots of tests, lots of treatment, what's necessary, what isn't necessary, and saying that somebody has got to enforce this; it's not going to happen if somebody doesn't. And by the way, he is James Rohack, from Texas, and he is president of the AMA, the American Medical Association.

Q. Thank you. Mr. President, clearly, when you spoke to us last week, you said that we entered the medical profession not to be bean-counters, not to be paper-pushers, but to be healers. And we totally agree. How are you going to assure the American public that medical decisions will still be between the patient and the physician, and not some bureaucracy that will make decisions on cost and not really what the patient needs?

Mr. Gibson. Once again, we'll leave that question on the table.

The President. All right.

Mr. Gibson. You answer it when we come back from commercial break. "Prescription for America" will continue.

[*There was a break in the town hall meeting.*]

Mr. Gibson. So, Mr. President, you remember the question?

The President. I do.

Well, first of all, I want to thank the American Medical Association. I did appear before them just last week in Chicago, my hometown, and had a terrific exchange of ideas, and we're continuing to work with all stakeholders, doctors, nurses, insurers, you—and obviously, patients. You name it, folks out there are interested in seeing this happen.

The most important thing I can say, James, on this issue is, if you are happy with your plan and you are happy with your doctor, then we don't want you to have to change. In fact, if we don't do anything, if there's inaction, I think that's where the great danger that you lose your health care exists, because of the cost problems that I already talked about.

So what we're saying is, if you are happy with your plan and your doctor, you stick with it. If you don't have insurance, if it's too much for you to afford, if your employer doesn't provide it or you're self-employed, then we will have what's called an exchange, but you can also think of it as a marketplace, where essentially people can compare and look at what options are out there. They'll have a host of different health care plans available, each with their own physicians network, and you will be able to sign up for the plan that works for you.

We will help people who don't have insurance get insurance. Doctors are not going to be working for the Government. They're still going to be working for themselves. They're still going to be focused on patient care. And in terms of how doctors are reimbursed, it's going to be the same system that we have now, except we can start making some changes so that, for example, we're rewarding quality of outcomes rather than the number of procedures that are done.

And this is true not just for doctors, it's also true for hospitals. One of the things that we could say to hospitals is reduce your readmission rate, which is also often a sign that health outcomes have not been so good. And it turns out that hospitals, when they're incentivized, actually can find ways to do it that every study shows does not have adverse effects on outcomes.

Mr. Gibson. You keep coming back to that point about if you like what you have, you can keep it.

The President. Right.

Health Care for the Elderly

Mr. Gibson. And I will return to that subject when we get to the issue of the public option and whether the Government should be in the insuring business. But one of the things, when you talk about the kinds of changes that may occur, the elderly are affected. Medicare will be affected. Twenty-eight percent—26, 28 percent of money in Medicare is spent in the last year of life. The elderly are very critically affected. Just a quick sound bite from a couple of people to lay out the parameters of the problem.

[*A video was shown.*]

Ms. Sawyer. And we have with us a couple of people who really represents the opposite ends on this spectrum too. I want to talk, if I can, to Jane Sturm. Your mother, Hazel Homer——

Q. Yes.

Ms. Sawyer. A hundred years old, and she wanted——

Q. She's 105 now, over 105. But at 100, the doctor had said to her, "I can't do anything more unless you have a pacemaker." I said go for it; she said go for it. But the arrhythmia specialist said, "No, it's too old." Her doctor said, "I'm going to make an appointment, because a picture is worth a thousand words." And when the other arrhythmia specialist saw her, saw her joy of life and so on, he said, "I'm going forward." So that was over 5 years ago. My question to you is, outside the medical criteria for prolonging life for somebody who is old, elderly, is there any consideration that can be given for a certain spirit, a certain joy of

living, a quality of life? Or is it just a medical cutoff at a certain age?

The President. Well, first of all, I want to meet your mom. [*Laughter*] And I want to find out what she's eating. [*Laughter*]

But, look, the first thing for all of us to understand is that we actually have some choices to make about how we want to deal with our own end-of-life care. And that's one of the things, I think, that we can all promote. And this is not a big Government program. This is something that each of us individually can do, is to draft and sign a living will so that we're very clear with our doctors about how we want to approach the end of life.

I don't think that we can make judgments based on people's spirit. That would be a pretty subjective decision to be making. I think we have to have rules that say that we are going to provide good, quality care for all people.

Mr. Gibson. But the money might not have been there for her pacemaker or for your grandmother's hip replacement.

The President. Well, and that's absolutely true. And end-of-life care is one of the most difficult, sets of decisions that we're going to have to make. I don't want bureaucracies making those decisions. But understand that those decisions are already being made in one way or another. If they're not being made under Medicare and Medicaid, they're being made by private insurers. We don't always make those decisions explicitly. We often make those decisions by just letting people run out of money or making the deductibles so high or the out-of-pocket expenses so onerous that they just can't afford the care.

And all we're suggesting—and we're not going to solve every difficult problem in terms of end-of-life care; a lot of that is going to have to be we as a culture and as a society starting to make better decisions within our own families and for ourselves. But what we can do is make sure that at least some of the waste that exists in the system that's not making anybody's mom better, that is loading up on additional tests or additional drugs that the evidence shows is not necessarily going to improve care, that at least we can let doctors know, and your mom know, that you know what, maybe this isn't going to help, maybe you're better off not having the surgery, but taking the painkiller.

And those kinds of decisions between doctors and patients, and making sure that our incentives are not preventing those good decisions and that the doctors and hospitals all are aligned for patient care, that's something we can achieve. We're not going to solve every single one of these very difficult decisions at end of life, and, ultimately, that's going to be between physicians and patients. But we can make real progress on this front if we work a little bit harder.

Ms. Sawyer. Is that a conversation you could have had with your mom? [*Laughter*]

Q. What I wanted to say was that the arrhythmia specialist who put the pacemaker in said that it cost Medicare $30,000 at the time. She had been in the hospital two or three times a month before that, so let's say 20, 30 times being in the hospital, maybe going to rehab. The cost was so much more, and that's what would have happened had she not had the pacemaker.

The President. Well, and that's a good example of where if we've got experts who are looking at this, and they are advising doctors across the board that the pacemaker may, ultimately, save money, then we potentially could have done that faster. I mean, this can cut both ways.

The point is we want to use science; we want doctors and medical experts to be making decisions that all too often right now are driven by skewed policies, by outdated means of reimbursement, or by insurance companies. And everybody's families, I think, have experienced this in one way or another. That's something—that's the reason we need reform right now.

Mr. Gibson. We're going to take one more commercial break, Mr. President. When we come back, we're going to get into the issue of whether or not in a reform measure there should be Government insurance for people, because a lot of people are very uncomfortable with that idea. "Prescription for America" continues.

[*There was a break in the town hall meeting.*]

Public Health Care Plan/Government Involvement in Health Care

Mr. Gibson. As I probably could have anticipated, this is running a little longer than we thought. The President has been nice enough to say he would stay during your local news, and we will continue this discussion during the "Nightline" half hour.

And so we're going to get into that public option and whether there should be the Government insurance as part of all of this. But I do want to get to cost, because as you know, the Congressional Budget Office is estimating that this is going to cost over the next 10 years 1 trillion to $2 trillion. There's all these estimates. And the question is, can we afford it? And there's a lot of people who have that question on their minds.

Ms. Sawyer. And bringing in Christopher Bean from Maryland.

Q. Good evening. It's a pleasure to be here and meet you.

The President. Thanks, Christopher.

Q. I do have kind of a two-base question. I'm going to read it, because I'm very nervous. [*Laughter*] In light of this proposed health care reform and national health care system, I have many concerns. One of them is the "Big Brother" fear: How far is Government going to go in reference to my personal life and health care treatments? And then secondly, how and who will pay for the national health care system?

The President. Good. Well, look, both are great questions. We've been sort of circling around your first question, the whole "Big Brother" fear. What kind of insurance, Chris, do you have right now? What kind of coverage do you have?

Q. It's a BlueCross BlueShield.

The President. It's a BlueCross BlueShield. So if you're happy with your plan, as I said, you keep it. Now, there are some restrictions we want to place on insurers. Preexisting conditions is a tool that has prevented a lot of people from either not being able to get insurance or, if they lose their job, they can't find insurance. We think those policies should end. So there are going to be some areas where we want to regulate the insurers a little more.

Now, in exchange, they're going to have a bigger customer pool. And so we think that they may not make as much profit on every single person that they provide coverage to. On the other hand, overall, I think they can still be profitable.

Now, in terms of cost, understand that the system is already out of whack in terms of costs as it is. So if we do nothing, costs are going to keep on going up 6, 7, 8 percent per year, and government, businesses, and families are all going to find themselves either losing their health care or paying a lot more out of pocket. That's going to happen if we do nothing.

What I've said is, let's change the system so that our overall cost curve starts going down by investing in a range of things: prevention, health IT, et cetera. We will have some upfront costs, and the estimates, as Charlie has said, have been anywhere from a trillion to $2 trillion. But what we've said is, what my administration has said, what I've said, is that whatever it is that we do, we pay for. So it doesn't add to our deficit.

Now, we've put forward some specific ways of paying for the health reform that we talked about. About two-thirds of the cost would be covered by reallocating dollars that are already in the health care system; taxpayers are already paying for it, but it's not going to stuff that's making you healthier.

So a good example of that: We spend $177 billion over 10 years on providing subsidies to insurers. And if we can take that money and use it to help train young doctors for primary care, to provide more coverage, to improve prevention and wellness, that's a good way of spending money that we're already spending.

About a third of the costs will come from new revenue. And so what I've proposed is, is that we cap the itemized deductions that the top 2 or 3 percent get—people making over 250 a year, me and Charlie—so that our item—so that we're itemizing our deductions at the same level as most middle class families are. With that additional money, we would have paid for all the health care that I'm proposing.

So there's a way of paying for this that doesn't add to the deficits. And the last point I'll make—it's a big question; I was trying to be quick, because Charlie is looking at his watch—[*laughter*]—the last point is, all this money that I just talked about, those are hard dollars. We know they are, and so we know that this would not add to the deficit.

It doesn't count all the savings that may come from prevention, may come from eliminating all the paperwork and bureaucracy because we've put forward health IT; it doesn't come from the evidence-based care and changes in reimbursement that I've already discussed about. And the reason is, is because the Congressional Budget Office, the CBO, which sort of polices what all various programs cost, they're not willing to credit us with those savings. They say, that may be nice, that may save a lot of money, but we can't be certain.

So we expect that not only are we going to be able to pay for health care reform in a deficit-neutral way, but that it's also going to achieve big savings across the system, including in the private sector, where the Congressional Budget Office never gives us any credit. But if hospitals and doctors are starting to operate in a smarter way, that's going to help you, even if you're not involved in a Government system. That's how we can end up achieving costs. But it requires all of us making some upfront investments, and I think we can find a bipartisan way to do that.

Ms. Sawyer. Mr. President, we're going to take a break, come back with a lot more questions about whether the Government should be involved in all of this, who is going to be covered, and how. We'll be back.

[*There was a break in the town hall meeting.*]

Paying for Health Care Reform

Ms. Sawyer. ——question from Dr. Gail Wilensky, who ran Medicare in the Bush administration. Your question?

Q. I want to go back to how we pay for the expansions. Estimates, as you indicated, probably $1½ trillion to cover everyone. You mentioned savings on Medicare and Medicaid, five to six hundred billion from the numbers you've provided, another 300 billion from additional revenue. That leaves about 300 to 600 billion more. What do we do in ways that CBO will count so that we can actually get everybody covered?

Mr. Gibson. And run that down in about 30 seconds. [*Laughter*]

The President. Well, look, that's the challenge. And obviously, there's a vigorous debate taking place. There are a whole host of ideas, some that cut across parties. There are people who think that we should tax benefits—health care benefits at a certain level, cap the deduction. There are others who proposed a surcharge on high-income individuals. There are other cuts that may be obtained that, ultimately, we could find scorable.

Here's my general point, because I know that we're starting to wrap up: This is not an easy problem, and it's especially not an easy problem when the economy is going through a difficult phase. We've taken a body blow to the economy, and families were oftentimes hurting even before then.

But the one thing I'm absolutely confident about is that whenever this country has met a significant challenge to our long-term well-being, that we, ultimately, rise up and meet it. And this is one of those moments where the stars are aligned. We've got insurers who are interested, doctors who are interested, nurses, patients. AARP is here, and they've seen some of the potential benefits. We're actually going to be filling the doughnut hole; drug companies have said that they'd be willing to reduce the costs for seniors for prescription drugs as part of health care reform.

But we have to have the courage and the willingness to cooperate and compromise in order to make this happen. And if we do, it's not going to be a completely smooth ride. There are going to be times over the next several months where we think health care is dead, it's not going to happen. But if we keep our eye on the prize, and that we recognize that America has always been up to these big challenges, and we can't afford not to act, then I'm absolutely convinced that we can get it done this time.

Mr. Gibson. So that concludes our prime-time special, "Prescription for America," but your local news is coming up next. And we hope

you'll stay with us; the President is going to stay with us, our audience stays with us, and we will have more questions for him about health care reform during the "Nightline" half-hour.

[*There was a break in the town hall meeting.*]

Public Health Care Plan/Government Involvement in Health Care

Mr. Gibson. And we welcome you to this special edition of "Nightline." Just to tell you where we are, we're in the East Room of the White House with the President and 164 invited guests here who represent all different perspectives on the subject of health care reform. And we have questions for the President—call this "Prescription for America." We had an hour there on prime time earlier before your local news, but the President is going to stay with us, and we have more questions, and there are some critical things that we did not get to in that hour. Most critically of all, in talking about health care reform, there's the very controversial subject of whether there needs to be a public option, whether there needs to be Government-run insurance as one of the options to get more people insured and for the general nature of health care reform.

Your critics on the Republican side of the Senate Finance Committee wrote you a letter and said, "At a time when major Government programs like Medicare and Medicaid are already on a path to fiscal insolvency, creating a brand new program will not only worsen our long-term financial outlook, but also negatively impact American families who enjoy private coverage for their insurance." What do you say to them?

The President. They're wrong. [*Laughter*] And so let's just explain, as clearly as possible, what we're talking about. What we want to do, as I said before, was set up a health care exchange, or a marketplace, essentially giving the American people the same kind of options that Members of Congress do or Federal employees do. You—there is a range of options that are available. Private insurers will participate. You will be able to do some one-stop shopping and compare all the different plans, what kind of benefits they provide, what are the deductibles, figure out what's best for you.

Now, what we've said is, as one option among multiple options should be a public option, where we set up a insurer that isn't profit-driven, that can keep administrative costs low, and that can serve as competition to the private insurers. Now, what—the argument that's been made has been that somehow the public option will crowd out private insurers.

Mr. Gibson. It's not a level playing field.

The President. And that's the argument, that it's not a level playing field. And what we've said is, it wouldn't be a level playing field if the Government can just print money and subsidize that public plan so that premiums are a lot lower than costs and doctors are getting reimbursed a lot lower than they do in the private sector. Well, that's true. It also wouldn't be a very good plan.

But what we've said is that we can set up a public option in which they're collecting premiums just like any private insurer, that doctors are reimbursed at a fair rate, but because administrative costs are lower, we are able to keep private insurers honest in terms of the growth of costs of premiums and deductibles and so forth.

Now, you'll always hear folks say that the free market can do it better; Government can't run anything. And what I say is, well, if that's the case, nobody is going to choose the public option. So the private insurers, who I think are very confident that they're providing a good service and a good product to their customers, should feel confident that they can compete with just one other option.

A lot of the objection to the public option idea is not practical; it's ideological. People don't like the idea of Government being involved. But keep in mind that the two areas where Government is involved—are involved in health care—Medicare and the VA—actually, there's pretty high satisfaction among the people who participate.

Private Insurance Plans

Mr. Gibson. Well, Diane is here with the head of a major insurance company.

Ms. Sawyer. If I could, I'm going to bring in Ron Williams from Aetna, CEO of Aetna. And if I can reverse the order a little bit, Mr. President, I'd like to ask a question of him, and then let you come in on his answer.

The President. Absolutely.

Ms. Sawyer. Mr. Williams, Aetna, to take one—an insurance company—we hear all over the country, people see their premiums going up 119 percent in the last several years; they see the profits of the insurance companies in the billions and billions of dollars. Even in a lean year, they see profits in the billions of dollars. Is the President right that you need to be kept honest?

Q. Well, I would first say, I would commend the President for the commitment he's made to really try to get and keep everyone covered. And I think, as a health insurance company, we're committed to that.

In the context of the question that you ask, I think that it's difficult to compete against a player who is also the person who is refereeing the game. And so I think in the context of thinking about a Government plan, what we say is, let's identify the problem we're trying to solve; let's work collaboratively with physicians, hospitals, and other health care professionals and make certain that we solve the problem, as opposed to introduce a new competitor who has the rulemaking ability that Government would have.

Ms. Sawyer. Mr. President?

The President. Well, I think that—first of all, I want to say that Mr. Walters [Williams]* has been very cooperative. We've been having a series of conversations, and I appreciate the constructive manner in which we've been trying to work together. But I just want to make clear that the Government, whatever rules it provides to insurers, a public plan would have to abide by those same rules. So we're not talking about an unlevel playing—unequal playing field; we're talking about a level playing field.

I also want to point out that one of the incentives for private insurers to get involved in this process is that potentially they're going to have a whole bunch of new customers, paying customers. And if we are, as part of health care reform, going to go forward in providing additional coverage to people who either don't have health insurance or who are underinsured—and that's a lot of working people, I just want to be clear. These are people who are working every day and are still finding themselves having a great deal of trouble and oftentimes collecting huge amounts of debt. If we're going to give all these new customers to the insurance industry, one of the things that we should say is, in return, that we change some of our practices and at least have some competition so that, for example, you can't eliminate people for preexisting conditions; you can't cherry-pick just the healthiest folks. And a public option is one tool by which we can do this.

And I think that the insurance companies will still thrive. They've got terrific leadership. Aetna is a well-managed company, and I'm confident that your shareholders are going to do well.

Private Insurance Plans vs. Public Health Plan

Mr. Gibson. Mr. President, there is a lot of doubts about this as to whether it's a level playing field. The Lewin Group studied this. There's 177 million people in this country with private insurance through their employers. That group estimates, with Government insurance, that employers will go to that because it will be cheaper, and they estimate—the head of the Lewin Group, I believe, is here, Mr. Shiels—they estimated that two-thirds of people would go to the private—would go to the public insurance option. Let me get you a microphone. Can we get him a microphone, please? Thank you.

Q. Well, we looked at several different options. You could design it in several different ways. There was a particular scenario that people looked at, and that's what got all the attention. It's one where the premiums would be, for a family, for example, would be as much as $2,500 a year less than in the private market. The reason for it is that they paid under—they used the Medicare payment reimbursement

* White House correction.

methodology. And they pay physicians a lot less, hospitals a lot less.

So the premium came out to as much as $2,500 a family lower in that particular scenario. That's pretty attractive. We estimate that 70 percent of anybody with private insurance would make the shift to the public plan.

Mr. Gibson. Which would be millions of people going over to public insurance. You keep saying, if you have what you like, you can keep it. But if your employer goes over to the Government program, maybe you can't keep what you have.

The President. Well, first of all, I think it's important to understand, and I think the Lewin Group acknowledges this, that there are a whole series of ways that we could design this. One of the things that we've said is that if you are eligible for your employer plan, then you can't just go into the public plan. You can't decide that you're already having a pretty good deal in insurance and you're just going to dump that—what's called a firewall.

The other thing we're doing is we're saying to employers, to provide them a disincentive for just dumping people out of existing plans, is there's going to be a "pay or play" provision. If you're not providing health insurance to your employees and you're a large employer, you're going to have to kick in a certain amount of money, because it's not fair for taxpayers to have to cover your employees, whether it's through a public plan or through uncompensated care, essentially sending people to the emergency room, which, by the way, adds to all of our premiums collectively about a thousand bucks a year.

So we would—I think there are some legitimate questions in terms of how the public option is designed. One thing I have to say, though, is it's not an entirely bad thing if—as long as they're reimbursing doctors in a adequate way, and so not being oppressive on health care providers, and as long as there are not a whole bunch of taxpayer subsidies going into a public plan. If the public plan can do it cheaper and provides good quality care, that's the competition that we talked about. I don't think you're going to get a lot of complaints from people if this—the deal is a better deal. If it's not a better deal, then people aren't going to choose it. But what we think is, is that we can set up a system in which you are expanding choices for individuals as opposed to constricting them.

Mr. Gibson. All right. We'll take a commercial break. "Nightline" will continue. Stay with us. More questions for the President.

[*There was a break in the town hall meeting.*]

Medicare and Medicaid

Mr. Gibson. And we're back. Our special edition of "Nightline" continues.

Mr. President, on this issue of cost of this entire thing, a lot of people are concerned that it's going to be so expensive, their taxes are going to go up. And we have a question on that very subject. Is David Hattenfield here?

Ms. Sawyer. Yes.

Mr. Gibson. David, where are you? Stand up.

Ms. Sawyer. Right here.

Q. Yes, I guess, the—first of all, I'd like to just say it is good to be here this evening.

The President. Thank you, David.

Q. With the cost of health care, I'm pretty satisfied with my own plan. It's not everything that it should be or could be, but I am concerned that—of the Government taking over health care, and, you know, Social Security isn't doing real well, at least that's what we're being told, and how can we know that the Government is going to be able to handle the cost of health care? Isn't that going to tax me? Isn't it going to be taxing my benefits? Those kind of things.

The President. Right. Well, look, I think it's a very legitimate question. I guess I—the first point I'd make is, if we don't do anything, costs are going to go out of control. Nobody disputes this. Medicare and Medicaid are the single biggest drivers of the Federal deficit and the Federal debt by a huge margin. And at the pace at which they're going up, if we don't do some of the things that we've talked about tonight—changing how we pay for quality instead of quantity, making sure that we are investing in prevention, all those game-changers that I discussed earlier—if we don't do those

things, Medicare and Medicaid are going to be broke, and it will consume all of the Federal budget. Every program that currently exists under the Federal budget, except defense and entitlements, all that would be swept aside by the cost of health care if we do nothing.

So that's point number one. Point number two is that a lot of what we're talking about is reallocating existing health care dollars that are not being spent wisely. And almost everybody agrees that there is a lot of room for us to improve how we're spending existing health care dollars.

And point number three, there is going to be a need, initially, for some additional revenue. And I talked about our suggestion, my administration's suggestion, the best way to do that: capping itemized deductions for people making over $250,000 a year.

But I also believe that if we are doing this right, and we're bending the curve on health care, then you, who keeps a private plan, will see reductions in your out-of-pocket costs over time, so that instead of your health care premiums going up three times your wages over the next decade, it may only go up by the amount that inflation goes up generally. And that's real money in your pocket. That's real savings that would offset any potential increases.

By the way, I suspect that Charlie and I—again, 2, 3 percent of the population—we're the ones who would see our taxes go up a little bit to pay for that initial outlay.

Taxing Health Care Benefits

Mr. Gibson. But let me—on this tax question, let me get to this issue of taxing health care benefits. It isn't—there is a massive amount of money that employers pay for health care benefits, and it is not taxed, for me or you or anybody else in this room. You went after John McCain when he suggested taxing that money, that we would have to pay taxes on that.

The President. Right.

Mr. Gibson. Should we pay taxes on that? A lot of people question whether there's enough money to pay for all this. Are you willing to entertain the idea of taxing health care benefits?

The President. Well, I continue to strongly disagree with John McCain's plan that he presented during the campaign, which was to eliminate the deduction—let me finish——

Mr. Gibson. But you went after him for suggesting that we tax that money.

The President. I'm about to answer your question, Charlie.

Mr. Gibson. Okay, good. [*Laughter*]

The President. I continue to believe that it would be the wrong way to go, for us to eliminate the deduction or the exclusion on health care benefits that essentially taxes current benefits. What's being discussed in Congress right now is capping those—that deduction or that exclusion at a certain level.

I continue to believe that's not the best way to do it, because I think that what you would see—certainly if you eliminated it completely, essentially employers would stop providing health insurance, and then we would really have to have either a public plan or what John McCain was proposing, everybody just gets that money back in wages and then—or tax credits—and you go out and you shop by yourself. The problem is that the amount of money you're getting back is not going to be the same as the costs of an average insurance plan, especially if you're not in a pool.

What's being—that's not what's being discussed right now in Congress. They're saying, at a certain level, whether it's 13,000 or $17,000 a year, which is what they consider to be a high-end or a Cadillac plan, maybe your deduction would phase out. I continue to believe that the better way for us to fund this is through the capping of the itemized deduction.

But I think there are people, in good faith, who are saying a cap would at least prevent these Cadillac plans that end up having people overutilizing the system. That's a debate that's taking place in Congress right now. I'm pushing my idea. Other folks are pushing their ideas. There's going to have to be some compromise at the end of the day.

Mr. Gibson. All right, Mr. President, we'll take another break. "Nightline" continues. Stay with us.

[*There was a break in the town hall meeting.*]

Health Care Systems in Other Countries vs. U.S. Health Care System

Ms. Sawyer. More quick questions, if we can here. Charlie, Marisa Milton—skeptical.

Q. A little skeptical on cost, Mr. President. Other industrialized nations provide coverage for all of their residents. They have higher quality care, and they do so spending about less than half of what we spend on health care now. So there's an argument that could be made that we actually don't need to spend any new money to fix the system if we're willing to make some tough decisions. Could you comment on that and maybe exploring that as an approach?

The President. Well, you're absolutely right that we spend at least 50 percent more than any other advanced country, and we don't have better outcomes in terms of infant mortality, longevity, all those various measures of wellness.

Now, a lot of those other countries employ a different system than we do. Not all of them, by the way, use a socialized medicine, as I think the British National Health Services is called. Some of them have what would be considered—almost all of them have what would be considered a single-payer system in which the government essentially operates a Medicare for all, even though doctors and health care providers are still separate.

The problem is, is that we have a employer-based system that has grown up over decades. For us to completely change our system, root and branch, would be hugely disruptive and, I think, would end up resulting in people having to completely change their doctors, their health care providers, in a way that I'm not prepared to go. This is one-sixth of our economy. I think that we can build on what works, fix what's broken, and still save substantial money.

Helping the Uninsured

Ms. Sawyer. Gary Cloutier, who is a body shop owner.

Q. Yes, body shop owner from Westfield, Massachusetts. Cloots Auto Body—got to give myself a plug.

The President. There you go. [*Laughter*]

Q. Okay. And I don't have insurance. I'm one of those 46 million that has none at all. Under Massachusetts policy, I make too much money, and I don't qualify. So I'm on the outside looking in. What are you going to do for people like me so that we don't fall through the cracks and we're able to get insurance like everybody else?

The President. Well, I think the self-employed are a huge example. And that's a growing part of our population, and that's a huge portion of the people who are having a very difficult time getting health insurance, partly because if you're not part of a big pool, you just can't get a good deal. It ends up being really expensive.

That's why we want to set up these exchanges, because for a person like you who is self-employed, doesn't have health insurance, for you to be part of this exchange, this marketplace, along with millions of others, suddenly you've got a little bit of market clout. Private insurers are going to want your business, and that means that you can negotiate for a better price. If we've got a public option in there, then that's also an alternative. And one of the things that we're going to need to do is to provide some subsidies for folks who just can't afford it, even when the option is provided to them.

That's where some of the new money is going to come in, is to make sure that people who don't have health insurance are able to get it without taking on huge amounts of debt.

Mr. Gibson. Dr. Tim Johnson, our medical editor. We started this with you outlining the parameters of this. Observation?

Training Health Care Personnel/Health Care for the Elderly

Dr. Johnson. Observation would be, if you're successful in getting rid of some of that 30 percent of unnecessary care, you're going to dislocate a lot of people. Now, some of them are criminals committing fraud, and they ought to go to jail, but a lot of them are real people with real jobs. Why not, right now, start talking about retraining these people for

primary care jobs: nurse practitioners, physician assistants? I hear no talk about that.

The President. Well, I think you make a reasonable point that if you're going to change this health care system over time, then, to be very specific, the amount of person power that goes into billing, administration, all the things that we hate about the health care system—even though those are wonderful people who are doing great work—they're over time, hopefully, going to be moving into the actually providing care side of the health care industry, as opposed to the bean-counting side of the health care industry.

Keep in mind, though, that this is—our goal here is to over time change the system, over time reduce costs, over time transition those folks into the health care side of it. We already mentioned that we still have a nurse shortage out there. We still have a shortage of people who are providing primary care. People who are already in the health care system, I think, naturally would gravitate towards that.

And the last point I would make is we've got an aging population, so we know that health care is still going to be a growth industry. And that's not an entirely bad thing. As societies get older, we spend a certain larger portion of our overall income on health care, and that's okay. We just don't want to spend it badly and in a way that bankrupts the entire economy, and that's why we need the changes that I've discussed.

Mr. Gibson. Mr. President, I want to thank you for joining us this evening, both for the earlier hour and for this half-hour of "Nightline." As we mentioned at the beginning, I think this is a topic that is going to be discussed in every living room, over every kitchen table—not only in the Congress, but mostly in the living rooms and in the kitchens of America. And that probably is where the decisions overall will be made: Can we support this? Are we for this? Are we certain that we'll have the care we need? And are we certain that this country can pay for it at a time when we don't have a lot of money.

The President. The answers are "yes" to all of that, and if the American people get behind this, this is going to happen.

Mr. Gibson. All right, Mr. President, I thank you for being with us. Thanks very much.

The President. Thank you so much. I've enjoyed it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:01 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Diane Sawyer, anchor, ABC's "Good Morning America"; Charles Gibson, anchor, ABC's "World News with Charles Gibson"; Orrin Devinsky, professor of neurology, neurosurgery, and psychiatry, New York University Medical School; John Corboy, professor of neurology, University of Colorado Health Sciences Center; Christopher D. Bean, material specialist, Allint Techsystems, Inc.; David Hattenfield, senior pastor, Cornerstone Baptist Church in Cumberland, MD; and Sen. John McCain, 2008 Republican Presidential candidate. Mr. Gibson referred to John Sheils, senior vice president, The Lewin Group. Ms. Sawyer referred to Gail R. Wilensky, former Administrator, Health Care Financing Administration; and Marisa L. Milton, vice president for health care policy and government relations, HR Policy Association. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 25. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

Remarks at a United We Serve Event
June 25, 2009

Hello, everybody. Thank you. Thank you. Well, first of all, it is great to see all of you here today. I want to thank all the Members of Congress who are here participating, all the families and young people who are here. I, obviously, have to thank my wife, Michelle Obama, who has spent much of her adult life focused on service. You know, she understands that nothing's more powerful than when you enlist the skill and talent and passion of the American people

on behalf of helping others. And she's been doing that all her life, and she's doing just a great job as First Lady in making that happen.

I want to thank all the men and women here at Fort McNair and all those who serve our country under our proud flag. We're grateful to each and every one of you. Those Americans in uniform, it's clear the nature of their service. I think sometimes what's forgotten is when one person in the family serves in our Armed Forces, that means the entire family is serving. And it's very gratifying to see all of you committed to helping to put together some backpacks and care packages for military families all across the country. This is an issue that Michelle has taken extraordinary interest in during the course of our campaign. She would meet with military families and discover that, despite all the things that Government may want to do, there are still a lot of holes and a lot of gaps that need to be filled in terms of giving the support to our military families that's necessary, and that's where you come in.

So we're very proud of them, but we're very proud of you. And we always want to remember that serving our country is not just something that we should expect our members of our Armed Forces to do, that's something that we should expect all of us as citizens to do.

On Monday, we launched "United We Serve," our summer service initiative. It's going to run all the way through our National Day of Service on September 11th. We want to ask every American to take some time out this summer to do something for others. Parents take your kids. They're going to have fun, they're going to be in sports camps, they're going to be watching TV and playing video games—once a week, take them down, whether it's to a soup kitchen or to volunteer on a community project, teach them what it means to be a real citizen. You'll find that, actually, the kids love it, and it's going to make a lasting impression on them. And if all of us are doing that this summer, then we're going to make this country stronger. We're working hard and Members of Congress are working really hard right now, to make our Government work for people, but Government can only do so much. Ultimately, the strength of America doesn't come from Capitol Hill, it doesn't come from the White House, it comes from the grassroots, and that's what all of you are about.

So I appreciate you. I hope you guys have some great fun today. I notice the air conditioning is on in here, which—[*laughter*]—sometimes, with some of these service projects, you got to change shirts at the end of the day. So enjoy yourselves, and I hope I get a chance to say thank you personally and shake some hands before the day is done. All right? Thank you very much, everybody.

Oh, one other thing that I wanted to mention—and since we've got a lot of press here—sometimes people want to be involved in service but don't know how to get involved in service.

And so what I want to do is just remind people, if you go to serve.gov—serve.gov—that will give you an entire toolkit for how you can sign up for service in your communities. So there's no excuses. And you can find the service project that's right for you. If you care about animals, you can find a shelter that helps with stray animals. If you care about tutoring kids or you've got an education background, you'll be able to find something that allows you to use your particular skills.

So get on serve.gov, and that's how you're going to be identify—going to be able to identify the service project that's right for you and your family. All right? Thank you, everybody. Have fun.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:14 a.m. at Fort Lesley J. McNair. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady.

Remarks on Energy Legislation
June 25, 2009

Hey, guys. Good afternoon. Right now the House of Representatives is moving towards a vote of historic proportions on a piece of legislation that will open the door to a new clean energy economy.

For more than three decades, we've talked about our dependence on foreign oil. And for more than three decades, we've seen that dependence grow. We've seen our reliance on fossil fuels jeopardize our national security. We've seen it pollute the air we breathe and endanger our planet. And most of all, we've seen that other countries realize a critical truth: The nation that leads in the creation of a clean energy economy will be the nation that leads the 21st century global economy.

Now is the time for the United States of America to realize this as well. Now is the time for us to lead. The energy bill before the House will finally create a set of incentives that will spark a clean energy transformation of our economy. It will spur the development of low-carbon sources of energy, everything from wind, solar, and geothermal power to safe nuclear energy and cleaner coal. It will spur new energy savings like the efficient windows and other materials that reduce heating costs in the winter and cooling costs in the summer.

And most importantly, it will make possible the creation of millions of new jobs. Now make no mistake, this is a jobs bill. We're already seeing why this is true in the clean energy investments we're making through the Recovery Act. In California, 3,000 people will be employed to build a new solar plant that will create 1,000 jobs. In Michigan, investments in wind turbines and wind technology is expected to create over, 2,600 jobs. In Florida, three new solar projects are expected to employ 1,400 people. The list goes on and on, but the point is this: This legislation will finally make clean energy the profitable kind of energy. That will lead to the creation of new businesses and entire new industries. And that will lead to American jobs that pay well and can't be outsourced.

I've often talked about the need to build a new foundation for economic growth so that we don't return to the endless cycle of bubble and bust that has led us into this deep recession. Clean energy and the jobs it creates will be absolutely critical to that new foundation.

This legislation has also been written carefully to address the concerns that many have expressed in the past. Instead of increasing the deficit, it's paid for by the polluters who currently emit dangerous carbon emissions. It provides assistance to businesses and families as they make the gradual transition to clean energy technologies. It gives rural communities and farmers the opportunity to participate in climate solutions and generate new income. And above all, it will protect consumers from the costs of this transition so that in a decade, the price to the average American will be about the same as a postage stamp per day.

Because this legislation is so balanced and sensible, it's already attracted a remarkable coalition of consumer and environmental groups, labor and business leaders, Democrats and Republicans. Now I urge every Member of Congress, Democrat and Republican, to come together to support this legislation. I can't stress enough the importance of this vote. I know this is going to be a close vote, in part because of the misinformation that's out there that suggests there's somehow a contradiction between investing in clean energy and our economic growth. But my call to those Members of Congress who are still on the fence, as well as to the American people, is this: We cannot be afraid of the future, and we can't be prisoners of the past. We've been talking about this issue for decades, and now is the time to finally act.

There's no disagreement over whether our dependence on foreign oil is endangering our security; we know it is. There's no longer a debate about whether carbon pollution is placing our planet in jeopardy; it's happening. And there's no longer a question about whether the jobs and the industries of the 21st century will be centered around clean, renewable energy. The only question is, which country will create these jobs and these industries? And I want that answer to be the United States of America, and

I believe that the American people and the men and women they sent to Congress share that view.

So let's take this opportunity to come together and meet our obligations to our constituents, to our children, to God's creation, and to future generations. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Members of Congress
June 25, 2009

Hello, everybody. We have just finished what I consider to be a very productive meeting on one of the most critical issues that I think this Nation faces, and that is an immigration system that is broken and needs fixing.

We have Members of Congress from both Chambers and from both parties, who have participated in the meeting and shared a range of ideas. I think the consensus is that despite the—our inability to get this passed over the last several years, the American people still want to see a solution in which we are tightening up our borders or cracking down on employers who are using illegal workers in order to drive down wages and oftentimes mistreat those workers. And we need a effective way to recognize and legalize the status of undocumented workers who are here.

Now, this is—there is not by any means consensus across the table. As you can see, we've got a pretty diverse spectrum of folks here. But what I'm encouraged by is that after all the overheated rhetoric and the occasional demagoguery on all sides around this issue, we've got a responsible set of leaders sitting around the table who want to actively get something done and not put it off until a year, 2 years, 3 years, 5 years from now, but to start working on this thing right now.

My administration is fully behind an effort to achieve comprehensive immigration reform. I have asked my Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, Secretary Janet Napolitano, to lead up a group that is going to be working with a leadership group from both the House and the Senate to start systematically working through these issues from the congressional leaders and those with the relevant jurisdiction. What we've heard is through a process of regular order, they would like to work through these issues both in the House and in the Senate.

In the meantime, administratively, there are a couple of things that our administration has already begun to do. The FBI has cleared much of the backlog of immigration background checks that was really holding up the legal immigration process. DHS is already in the process of cracking down on unscrupulous employers and, in collaboration with the Department of Labor, working to protect those workers from exploitation.

The Department of Homeland Security has also been making good progress in speeding up the processing of citizenship petitions, which has been far too slow for far too long. And that, by the way, is an area of great consensus, cuts across Democratic and Republican parties, the notion that we've got to make our legal system of immigration much more efficient and effective and customer-friendly than it currently is.

Today I'm pleased to announce a new collaboration between my Chief Information Officer, my Chief Performance Officer, my Chief Technologies Officer, and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Office to make the agency much more efficient, much more transparent, much more user-friendly than it has been in the past.

In the next 90 days, USCIS will launch a vastly improved web site that will, for the first time ever, allow applicants to get updates on their status of their applications via e-mail and text message and online. And anybody who's dealt with families who are trying to deal with, navigate the immigration system, this is going to save them huge amounts of time standing in line, waiting around, making phone calls, being put on hold. It's an example of some things that we can do administratively, even as we're

working through difficult issues surrounding comprehensive immigration. And the idea is very simple here. We're going to leverage cutting-edge technology to reduce the unnecessary paperwork, backlogs, and the lack of transparency that's caused so many people so much heartache.

Now, we all know that comprehensive immigration reform is difficult. We know it's a sensitive and politically volatile issue. One of the things that was said around the table is the American people still don't have enough confidence that Congress and any administration is going to get serious about border security. And so they're concerned that any immigration reform simply will be a short-term legalization of undocumented workers with no long-term solution with respect to future flows of illegal immigration.

What's also been acknowledged is that the 12 million or so undocumented workers are here, who are not paying taxes in the ways that we'd like them to be paying taxes, who are living in the shadows, that that is a group that we have to deal with in a practical, common-sense way. Now, I think the American people are ready for us to do so. But it's going to require some heavy lifting. It's going to require a victory of practicality and common sense and good policymaking over short-term politics. That's what I'm committed to doing as President.

I want to especially commend John McCain, who's with me here today, because along with folks like Lindsey Graham, he has already paid a significant political cost for doing the right thing. I stand with him; I stand with Nydia Velazquez and others who have taken leadership on this issue. I am confident that if we enter into this with the notion that this is a nation of laws that have to be observed and this is a nation of immigrants, then we're going to create a stronger nation for our children and our grandchildren.

So thank you all for participating. I'm looking forward to us getting busy and getting to work. All right? Thank you. Oh, and by the way, I hope everybody has got their Hawaiian shirts and their muumuus for our luau tonight.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:17 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to White House Chief Information Officer Vivek Kundra; White House Chief Performance Officer Jeffrey D. Zients; and White House Chief Technology Officer Aneesh Chopra.

Statement on the National Endowment for Democracy's 2009 Democracy Award Recipients
June 25, 2009

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and commend the National Endowment for Democracy's 2009 Democracy Award recipients Jorge Luis Garcia Perez, Jose Daniel Ferrer Garcia, Librado Linares, Ivan Hernandez Carrillo, and Iris Tamara Perez Aguilera and all the brave men and women who are standing up for the right of the Cuban people to freely determine their country's future. Like too many of their fellow citizens, four of these individuals have been unjustly jailed for defending the basic freedoms we all hold dear in the Americas. It is my sincere hope that all political prisoners who remain jailed, including three of today's award recipients, will be unconditionally released and allowed to fully participate in a democratic future in Cuba.

Remarks at the Congressional Luau
June 25, 2009

Aloha. It is wonderful to see you all. I am not going to make a long speech. I just want to say to all the Members of Congress, you've been working hard. I wish I could give you all trips to

Hawaii, but I figured since—given our budget crunch we can't do that, that we'd at least bring Hawaii to you.

And I want to thank our wonderful entertainers, Tihati. Thank you very much. I want to thank all the chefs who prepared the outstanding food, especially Alan Wong, a friend from Hawaii, does a great job. I want to—in case you don't know, this is Malia Obama, Sasha Obama, Michelle Obama, and the star of the family, Bo Obama.

I hope you guys have a wonderful time. Enjoy. Feel free to just roam around here. And thank you again, Members of Congress, for the unbelievable work that you're doing for the American people each and every day. I appreciate you. Thank you, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:05 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to entertainers Tihati; and chef Alan Wong. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Vice President Joe Biden.

Statement on Signing the Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2009
June 24, 2009

Today I have signed into law H.R. 2346, the "Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2009." This Act provides the necessary resources for our troops while supporting ongoing diplomatic and development efforts around the world.

We face a security situation abroad that demands urgent attention. The Taliban is resurgent and al Qaeda is increasing its attacks from its safe haven along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. The funding provided in this Act will ensure that the full force of the United States is engaged in an overall effort to defeat al Qaeda and uproot this safe haven.

At the same time, funding contained in this Act will provide resources to help create political and economic stability in post-conflict areas. These funds will assist Afghans and Iraqis in protecting and sustaining their infrastructure and building their capacity for more responsive and transparent governance. The Act also provides critical support for continued U.S. diplomatic and development activity in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

In addition, this Act includes funding for other domestic and international issues, including nearly $8 billion to enhance our Nation's capability to respond to the potential spread of the H1N1 flu outbreak. It also expands the resources available to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) by allowing it to boost its lending ability. Many developing countries are experiencing severe economic decline and a massive withdrawal of capital, and the IMF needs to make sure it has the resources necessary to effectively respond to the current financial crisis.

However, provisions of this bill within sections 1110 to 1112 of title XI, and sections 1403 and 1404 of title XIV, would interfere with my constitutional authority to conduct foreign relations by directing the Executive to take certain positions in negotiations or discussions with international organizations and foreign governments, or by requiring consultation with the Congress prior to such negotiations or discussions. I will not treat these provisions as limiting my ability to engage in foreign diplomacy or negotiations.

BARACK OBAMA

The White House,
June 24, 2009.

NOTE: H.R. 2346, approved June 24, was assigned Public Law No. 111–32. This statement was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 26.

The President's News Conference With Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany

June 26, 2009

President Obama. Willkommen. It's my pleasure to welcome Chancellor Merkel to the White House. We had a very productive discussion in the Oval Office, and our meetings will continue this afternoon.

Chancellor Merkel's visit is the latest chapter in the long partnership between our two countries: the service of our men and women in uniform, who stood together through a long cold war and who serve today in Afghanistan; the innovation of our entrepreneurs, who helped to sustain our economies; and the bonds of friendship and trust between our people, which are unbreakable.

In recent months, I've come to appreciate these bonds through my partnership with Chancellor Merkel. We've worked closely together at the G–20 summit in London, the NATO summit, and the EU-U.S. summit in Prague. I value her wisdom and her candor, and I admire very much her leadership and her pragmatic approach to getting things done. She and the German people have welcomed me to Germany twice, during the NATO summit and again this month in Dresden, and today I'm pleased to return the hospitality.

Chancellor Merkel shares my belief that no single nation can meet the challenges of our time alone. Today we reaffirmed that the United States and Germany, one of our closest allies and an indispensable partner, will continue to play a leadership role across the range of challenges.

We're building on the bold steps we took at the G–20 summit by aggressively confronting the global economic crisis. I underscored our commitment to strengthening financial regulations, and I welcomed Chancellor Merkel's commitment to reform. As we prepare for the G–8 summit in Italy and look ahead to the G–20 summit in Pittsburgh, we agreed on the need to avoid protectionism and to embrace concerted, collective action that creates sustainable growth and shared prosperity.

I reiterated America's commitment to stand with Germany and lead in confronting the energy and climate change crisis. And let me say, Chancellor, that I've been very impressed by Germany's foresight and commitment to clean energy, which I saw in the many wind turbines as I traveled over the German landscape. And it's my hope that the United States will match that commitment today when our House of Representatives votes on a critical energy bill that will promote a new generation of clean, renewable energy in our country.

The Chancellor and I discussed the tragic situation in Iran. Today we speak with one voice: The rights of the Iranian people to assemble, to speak freely, to have their voices heard, those are universal aspirations. And their bravery in the face of brutality is a testament to their enduring pursuit of justice. The violence perpetrated against them is outrageous. Despite the Government's efforts to keep the world from bearing witness to that violence, we see it, and we condemn it. As I've said before, the Iranian people will be the ultimate judge of their Government's actions. But if the Iranian Government desires the respect of the international community then it must respect the rights and heed the will of its people.

The Iranian Government also has other responsibilities. Working with Germany, our other European partners, as well as Russia and China, we're working to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapons capacity and unleashing a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. We will encourage Iran to take a path that respects international norms and leads to greater security and prosperity for the Iranian people.

We also discussed the broader Middle East and the need for all parties to redouble their efforts to achieve lasting peace, including two states, Israel and a Palestinian state, living side by side in peace and security. And during our recent visit to Buchenwald, Chancellor Merkel spoke eloquently of Germany's everlasting responsibility to the safety and security of Israel. Going forward, Germany will remain a critical partner in our efforts to bring safety and security to Israelis, the Arab States, and Palestinians,

who must reject violence and recognize Israel's right to exist.

We agreed that confronting violent extremism and preventing terrorist attacks demands our continued commitment and a comprehensive strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This includes dismantling and disrupting, defeating Al Qaida and its allies. Germany has been a strong partner in the NATO mission in Afghanistan, and we honor those who serve there, including American and German soldiers who gave their lives there this week.

As I prepare to visit Moscow, Chancellor Merkel and I reaffirmed our commitment to a more substantive relationship with Russia, working with the Russian Government on issues where we agree and honestly confronting those areas where we disagree. In Moscow, we will continue to explore ways in which the United States and Russia can advance our common interests, including our joint commitment to reducing our nuclear arsenals and strengthening the global nonproliferation regime.

Meeting these challenges will be neither quick nor easy. But I'm reminded of a lesson from my recent visit to Dresden. Chancellor Merkel took me to a timeless Baroque church devastated in the Second World War. For decades it lay in ruin, a symbol of war. But thanks to the donations of Germans and Americans and people around the world, it was rebuilt, and its glory was restored. Today, it stands as a stunning symbol of what's possible when countries and friends work together. And in that spirit, I want to welcome my friend Chancellor Merkel.

Chancellor Merkel. Well, thank you very much, and let me say that we very much like to remember—and when I say "we," I mean the whole of the German people. We have very fond memories, I should say, of your visit to Dresden, and also very moving memories of your visit, Mr. President, to the former concentration camp of Buchenwald.

We celebrated on the 23d of May 60-year anniversary of the Federal Republic of Germany, and we're more than aware of the fact that Germany would not stand as it stands today had not our American friends and partners helped us after the end of the Second World War. But we also know that now, in this 21st century, challenges cannot be met by just one nation going it alone. So we need to stand together, we need to do this together, and in this spirit, we conducted our talks.

We had a number of issues on our agenda today. I would like to underline that the Iranian people needs to be given the right to peaceful demonstrations; that the Iranian people has the right to have votes recounted and the election results substantiated; that the rights of human beings, of individuals, of citizens are indivisible the world over, and also apply, therefore, to the Iranian people.

We have to work to it that the Iranian nuclear program is stopped, that Iran does not get possession of a nuclear weapon. In this context, it is very desirable, of course—that also looms large on our agenda—that the peace process in the Middle East gains momentum, that there is progress, visible progress here, because that too might send out a positive message to those forces in the Middle East who are not ready to be peaceful.

Germany and America will work very closely together on this, just as on the questions related to arms reduction and disarmament. We would like to wish you, Mr. President Obama, the best of success during the upcoming visit to Russia. A partnership with Russia is very important for Germany, also important for the European Union. But we have every interest also in seeing a very good relationship between the United States of America and Russia. We need Russia, for example, we need it looking at the problems we have with Iran, and we want to forge a common position wherever possible with Russia, but also with China. We've done that over the years in the format of the United Nations with the number of resolutions that that needs to be continued.

We dealt with the preparation of the G–8 meeting that is upcoming and also the Pittsburgh meeting of the G–20. We're on a good path here. I think there's been progress.

You have made very important steps here in the United States as regards—as to financial market regulation. We and the European Union are also working on that. And in the

summer of this year we can then sort of take stock and see where these regulations meet and try to create a level playing field for the rest of the world. It makes it possible to boost competition, but that avoids a future crisis of this magnitude.

We are very grateful that we are also able, together with the United States, to work on principles as to how matters are to be taken into the future after this crisis. But we now have to emerge, obviously, from this crisis and recovery of our economies is a great precondition for further progress.

We talked about climate. Just as I did this morning when I was in Congress, I said that this is indeed a sea change that I see this upcoming bill that was debated today in the House on climate. That this really points to the fact that the United States are very serious on climate. And this has—it should not be underestimated what sort of opportunity this brings to us to come to a good, a sustainable result during the Copenhagen conference.

I have been in many, many climate negotiations and debates in my country, in the European Union, so I know what's at stake when you talk about reduction targets, how tricky that is when you try to come to certain common ground; so I wish you every success. I hope that you will come to a good result when the vote is taken. I think it's so important that we are at one in saying we want a success in Copenhagen. We need to talk to the emerging countries and the emerging economies as to their possible contribution. But the fact that with the United States we stand where we stand today is an enormous success, which I would not have thought possible a year ago, let me be very serious.

Thank you very much for the gracious hospitality offered to me and for the very extensive exchange of views that we were having.

President Obama. We've got time for a few questions, so I'm going to start with Jeff Zeleny of New York Times.

Iran

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. A couple weeks ago on Iran you suggested that there were few differences with Mr. Mousavi and President Ahmadi-nejad. I'm wondering if the ensuing time since you made those comments have changed your view on that? And will you apologize for interfering in Iranian affairs, as President Ahmadi-nejad suggested you should, or does he need to apologize for saying that you are, quote, "someone like President Bush?" [*Laughter*]

And Chancellor Merkel——

President Obama. Well, Jeff, how many questions are you getting in here, brother? [*Laughter*] I think you got two in, and we want to make sure we give some other folks a chance.

Well, first of all, what I said originally was that given the structure of the Iranian Government and that power resided ultimately with Khamenei, the Supreme Leader, and given that there weren't at that point significant differences on the core national security interests that we initially had talked about diplomatically—i.e., nuclear weapons development in Iran, the exportation of terrorist activity—that we could not automatically assume that there would be a huge shift on those particular national security issues depending on who won that election.

I think what's absolutely clear is over the course of subsequent days, that Mousavi has shown to have captured the imagination or the spirit of forces within Iran that were interested in opening up, and that he has become a representative of many of those people who are on the streets and who have displayed extraordinary bravery and extraordinary courage.

I continue to believe that, ultimately, it's up to the Iranian people to make decisions about who their leaders are going to be. But as I said this week, and I've said previously, a government that treats its own citizens with that kind of ruthlessness and violence and that cannot deal with peaceful protestors who are trying to have their voices heard in a equally peaceful way, I think, has moved outside of universal norms, international norms, that are important to uphold.

And Chancellor Merkel and I share a—share the belief that what's happened in Iran is unacceptable when it comes to violence against its own citizens, and we call on the Iranian Government to uphold those international principles.

What was the second part of your question there, Jeff?

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. I was wondering if you had a response to his call for you to apologize, or if he should apologize for calling you someone like Bush.

President Obama. I don't think—I don't take Mr. Ahmadi-nejad's statements seriously about apologies, particularly given the fact that the United States has gone out of its way not to interfere with the election process in Iran. And I'm really not concerned about Mr. Ahmadi-nejad apologizing to me. I would suggest that Mr. Ahmadi-nejad think carefully about the obligations he owes to his own people. And he might want to consider looking at the families of those who've been beaten or shot or detained. And that's where I think Mr. Ahmadi-nejad and others need to answer their questions.

Relocation of Guantanamo Bay Detainees

Q. Mr. President, did you talk with the Chancellor about the issue of Guantanamo and the closure? What do you expect from Germany? Do you expect that criminals can come to our country as they can do to Italy, as Prime Minister Berlusconi promised?

[*At this point, the reporter asked a question in German, and it was translated as follows.*]

Interpreter. Madame Chancellor, could you make any commitments on this?

President Obama. Well, first of all, I have discussed in the past with Chancellor Merkel our interest in closing Guantanamo. I think it has become a symbol internationally of the United States straying from some of our core ideals in our very legitimate pursuit of our national security and our concerns about international terrorism. And we are going to be looking for the help of our friends and our allies as we execute that process, one that's going to be admittedly difficult politically.

And so in the past I've spoken not only to Chancellor Merkel, but other European leaders. We're pleased that the EU provided a legal framework for how to evaluate the detainees that are in Guantanamo. And we have seen a positive response from countries across Europe in the general sense of wanting to help.

And I think the particulars, the specifics of what particular detainee might be transferred where, those are still very preliminary discussions. And I think that Chancellor Merkel, she has an obligation, obviously, to make sure that Germany's national security interests come first in these considerations. We understand that, and we expect that we will continue to have constructive negotiations on some of these issues. But there have been no particular requests made about X number of detainees being placed by such and such a date, and Chancellor Merkel has not made commitments that are specific in that sort. The conversations have remained at a fairly general level at this point.

Chancellor Merkel. Well, we did address that issue, as it was said. And I made it very clear that we're not going to shirk that responsibility. Our Minister of the Interior is responsible for looking into the matter, and I said that it might be a good idea to continue to have very close contacts to the Home Secretary here in the United States. These contacts are already in existence because as we've gone through—the question of what is to happen with the former detainees of Guantanamo is one thing; we're at the beginning of a process. We're discussing that.

But let me tell you yet again very clearly, we are not going to shirk that particular responsibility, but it needs to be brought in line, as the President says, with the legal situation we have in Germany. We are showing a constructive spirit, and we will come to a result. I'm confident of that.

President Obama. Don Gonyea [National Public Radio].

Iran/Afghanistan

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, Madame Chancellor. A question for each of you. On Iran, do the events of the past few weeks and even of the past couple of days indefinitely stall your ability to have any kind of meaningful dialog with them on the nuclear issue? And frankly, are you just losing precious time on that issue?

And then on Iraq, an upsurge in violence—a lot of bombings, a lot of deaths—does that give you any second thoughts on the coming deadline to pull the combat troops from the cities?

President Obama. Well, on the Iranian issue, I think that we are still waiting to see how the situation in Iran plays out. Obviously, I continue to be deeply disturbed by reports of violence that are taking place there. I continue to call on the Iranian Government to deal with people who are peacefully protesting, wanting their voices to be heard, in a way that respects international principles.

There is no doubt that any direct dialog or diplomacy with Iran is going to be affected by the events of the last several weeks. And we don't yet know how any potential dialog will have been affected until we see what's happened inside of Iran.

I will tell you—and this was the point that I was making earlier in response to Jeff's question—we have a continuing set of national security interests that are going to have to be dealt with because the clock is ticking. Iran is developing nuclear capacity at a fairly rapid clip; they have been doing so for quite some time. Iran's possession of nuclear weapons would trigger an arms race in the Middle East that would be bad not just for U.S. security, it would be bad for the security of the entire region, including, by the way, Iranian security.

And so even as we clearly speak out in a unified voice in opposition to the violence that's taken place in Iran, we have to also be steady in recognizing that the prospect of Iran with a nuclear weapon is a big problem, and that we've got to work in concert with the international community to try to prevent that from happening.

So my expectation would be—and we did discuss this—that you're going to continue to see some multilateral discussions with Iran. There is a structure that exists, the P–5-plus-1 talks that include Russia and China. There are going to be discussions that continue on the international stage around Iranians'—Iran's nuclear program. I think the direct dialog between the United States and Iran and how that proceeds, I think we're going to have to see how that plays itself out in the days and weeks ahead.

On Iraq, obviously, any time there's a bombing in Iraq we are concerned. Any time there's loss of innocent life or the loss of military personnel, we grieve for their families and it makes us pay attention. I will tell you, if you look at the overall trend, despite some of these high-profile bombings, Iraq's security situation has continued to dramatically improve. And when I speak to General Odierno and Chris Hill, our Ambassador in Iraq, they continue to be, overall, very positive about the trend lines in Iraq.

I think there's still some work to do. I think the Maliki Government is not only going to have to continue to strengthen its security forces, but it's also going to have to engage in the kind of political give-and-take leading up to the national elections that we've been talking about for quite some time. And I haven't seen as much political progress in Iraq, negotiations between the Sunni, the Shi'a, and the Kurds, as I would like to see.

So there are always going to be—let me not say "always"—there will continue to be incidents of violence inside of Iraq for some time. They are at a much, much lower level than they were in the past. I think the biggest challenge right now is going to be less those attacks by remnants of Al Qaida in Iraq or other insurgent groups, and the bigger challenge is going to be, can the Shi'a, the Sunni, and the Kurds resolve some of these major political issues having to do with federalism, having to do with boundaries, having to do with how oil revenues are shared. If those issues get resolved, then I think you will see a further normalization of the security atmosphere inside of Iraq.

Chancellor Merkel. On Iran, over the past few weeks, we have seen horrifying scenes, looking at how, for example, the security forces there dealt with demonstrators. We will not forget this. And let me say that we shall do everything in order to identify the exact number of victims, who those victims were, how they dealt with those demonstrators.

In this day and age of the 21st century, Iran cannot count on the world community turning a blind eye to this. We are able to see this through images. My own experience from the

GDR tells me that it is so important that one knows when one is in such a situation that people somewhere else in the world are knowledgeable of what is happening to you.

And irrespective of that, the question that Iran must not be allowed to regain the possession of their weapon is even more important, without bringing, on the other hand, those in Iran who would like to have a different system, bringing them into difficulties. I mean, we would like to have a diplomatic solution to preventing Iran from gaining possession of a nuclear weapon.

So I completely agree with the President here. We have to bring Russia and China alongside in order to see to it that this solution is brought about. The more resolve, the more determination we show in doing that, the better our prospects also for the Middle East peace process. And I think we can be successful also in the Middle East process, and then be successful in our talks with Iran.

The President's Impression of Germany/Environment

[*A reporter began to ask a question in German, but the interpreter could not give a translation because of a technical problem. The reporter then continued in English as follows.*]

Q. [*Inaudible*]—where's Germany's place? And I'm asking for two reasons. You have a half-sister, Auma; she studied in Heidelberg, and I wanted to ask it already when I wrote the biography about your life. And what did she tell you about Germany? Has she had any unpleasant experience as an African woman in Germany in the eighties?

And a second question, you visited Germany twice, but you broke with the tradition of your predecessors to give interviews to the media of the host country before. Why is this? And how long do we have to wait—[*laughter*]—before you give—award a German outlet with an interview? Maybe until November 9, or will it be a little bit earlier? I would be very interested in that question.

And to the Chancellor——

President Obama. Would you like that interview? [*Laughter*]

Q. If this is a commitment, I would appreciate that very, very much. [*Laughter*]

Chancellor Merkel. We have to talk about that. [*Laughter*]

Q. Oh, you are coordinating your media policy already? [*Laughter*]

[*The reporter then continued in German, and it was translated as follows.*]

Interpreter. My second question is addressed to the Chancellor. You already made a distinction yourself on climate policy between the House of Representatives and the Senate. But how optimistic are you, after the talks you've had here, that more stringent rules on climate change will be successful, not only in the House but also pass through the Senate? What would be the consequence of that if they are not able to do this before the Copenhagen conference? How, then, would America deal with this situation? Have you received a reply to this?

President Obama. First of all, in terms of my emotional maps—[*laughter*]—the times that I have visited Germany have been extraordinary, and I've had a wonderful time. And the people of Germany have, I think, received me with great warmth and affection. Keep in mind that, obviously, I visited Germany even before I was elected President, and we had a pretty good rally in Berlin. It wasn't bad. And so I will always have, I think, a warm spot in my heart for Germany, in part because of the response and the reaction that I've received from the German people.

I will tell you that part of the warmth I feel toward Germany is because I like Chancellor Merkel a lot. I've now dealt with a lot of world leaders, and I think that Chancellor Merkel is smart, practical, and I trust her when she says something. And so that kind of approach is exactly what you want from an international partner. And I've very much enjoyed my interactions with her and her team.

My sister, she obviously had a great time in Heidelberg. When I met her, she was going out with a German guy. And I don't want to comment on how that played itself out. [*Laughter*] That may have an impact on how she views Germany right now, but

that's—[*laughter*]—I think a little too personal for a press conference.

Even though the question wasn't directed at me, I do want to make this point about climate change. Europe, in many ways, over the last several years has moved more rapidly than the United States on addressing this issue. And I've been very blunt and frank with Chancellor Merkel that we are still working through, creating the framework where we can help lead the international effort. I think that this legislation that we are seeking to pass indicates enormous progress from where we have been. But I think we all recognize that there's going to be more to do, and that the United States is going to have to work with Germany and other advanced economies to make sure that our obligations are clear. And then we're going to have to work with the emerging economies, which have enormous potential for growth, but, unfortunately, also have enormous potential for contributing to greenhouse gases, so that their obligations are clear.

And I'm the first one to acknowledge that the United States, over the last several years, has not been where we need to be. We're not going to get there all in one fell swoop, but I'm very proud of the progress that's being made, and I think that the energy bill that's being debated in the House is an example of that progress. If we can get that framework in place, I'm confident the United States can be an important partner in this process.

Chancellor Merkel. Well, you will understand my refraining from commenting in any way on the behavior of members of parliament who, after all, are free in their decisions. That would be totally counterproductive. But I must say that I'm very gratified to note that the President feels 100 percent committed to this issue, which has become apparent in all of our talks. He wants to see to it that Copenhagen becomes a success.

We are both convinced that this question of climate change amounts to much more than just numbers and targets. It means that we take a commitment and shoulder a responsibility for those countries in the world that will be far more heavily affected by climate change, but that we also feel committed to ensuring energy security for our own countries. Dependence on raw materials, on commodities, is also something that can bring us into very unpleasant political dependence. So it's always good to look at new technology, to use, for example, when you have finite fuel sources, to deal with them responsibly and economically. And this is something that we've come out very strongly in favor in our own countries, and we do it internationally.

Let me, perhaps, say something on Auma in Heidelberg. The book, "Dreams From My Father," she is telling us a little bit about her own impressions in Heidelberg. You probably read it. I found this very interesting because, on the one hand, she describes us as a country where quite quickly you have the impression that each and every one needs to fend for his or her self; there is not this big sort of community, the sort of family network that protects you that you have in Africa.

But then, as you go on throughout the book, Auma tells you it was also something good, maybe, because it strengthens people's own sort of awareness of their own self, of their own responsibility. And I think it's very important to look at this when we deal, for example, with Africa—that on the one hand we accept that the way that we live may sometimes be very tough, tough on people, but on the other hand, we should also, perhaps, in our dealings with the Africans, address how certain things can be dealt with more efficiently.

So it was, for me, a very enriching experience to read this book, understand a lot of things about her. And I think Heidelberg, after all, got through this very well—she——

President Obama. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:58 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Iranian Presidential candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi; Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; and Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq. Chancellor Merkel referred to Minister of the Interior Wolfgang Schaeuble of Germany; and Secretary of Homeland Security

Janet A. Napolitano. A reporter referred to Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy. Chancellor Merkel and some reporters spoke in German, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Statement on United Nations International Day in Support of Torture Victims
June 26, 2009

Twenty-five years ago, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention Against Torture, and 22 years ago this very day, the convention entered into force. The United States leading role in the negotiation of the convention and its subsequent ratification and implementation enjoyed strong bipartisan support. Today we join the international community in reaffirming unequivocally the principles behind that convention, including the core principle that torture is never justified.

Torture violates United States and international law as well as human dignity. Torture is contrary to the founding documents of our country and the fundamental values of our people. It diminishes the security of those who carry it out and surrenders the moral authority that must form the basis for just leadership. That is why the United States must never engage in torture and must stand against torture wherever it takes place.

My administration is committed to taking concrete actions against torture and to address the needs of its victims. On my third day in office, I issued an Executive order that prohibits torture by the United States. My budget request for fiscal year 2010 includes continued support for international and domestic groups working to rehabilitate torture victims.

The United States will continue to cooperate with governments and civil society organizations throughout the international community in the fight to end torture. To this end, I have requested today that the Department of State solicit information from all of our diplomatic missions around the world about effective policies and programs for stopping torture and assisting its victims, so that we and our civil society partners can learn from what others have done. I applaud the courage, compassion, and commitment of the many people and organizations doing this vitally important work.

Remarks on Energy Legislation
June 26, 2009

Today the House of Representatives took historic action with the passage of the American Clean Energy and Security Act. It's a bold and necessary step that holds the promise of creating new industries and millions of new jobs, decreasing our dangerous dependence on foreign oil, and strictly limiting the release of pollutants that threaten the health of families and communities and the planet itself. Now it's up to the Senate to take the next step. And I'm confident that in the coming weeks and months the Senate will demonstrate the same commitment to addressing what is a tremendous challenge and an extraordinary opportunity.

As always happens when we debate issues of this magnitude, we see lines of demarcation. There are those who argue that the status quo is acceptable, those who would have us continue our dependence on foreign oil and our reliance on fossil fuels despite the risks to our security, our economy, and the planet. But the American people know that the nation that leads in building a 21st century clean energy economy is the nation that will lead in creating a 21st century global economy. I want America to be that nation. And with this vote, the House has put America on the path to being that nation.

The fact is, just weeks ago, few in Washington believed that this day would come to pass.

The best bet, the safe bet, was that after three decades of failure, we couldn't muster the political will to tackle the energy challenge despite the necessity and urgency of action. But although Washington may not see it yet, there is a spirit of change that's taken hold across this country. As has happened at every critical juncture in our history, the American people are demanding that we abandon the failed policies and politics of the past; we no longer accept inaction; that we face up to the challenges of our time. And today the House has done exactly that.

I want to thank Speaker Pelosi for what was a prodigious effort on behalf of this measure. I also want to thank and recognize the chairs of the committees that worked so hard on this bill: Henry Waxman, Collin Peterson, Charlie Rangel. I want to acknowledge John Dingell, Ed Markey, Rick Boucher, and Mike Doyle, as well as many others who worked long and hard to get to this day. They spent months carefully crafting a plan that's sensitive to vulnerable communities and industries, and that ushers in a critical transition to a clean energy economy without untenable new burdens on the American people.

By creating a system of clean energy incentives, this bill complements our earlier actions to raise automobile fuel efficiency standards, to double our capacity to generate electricity from sources like wind and sun, and to make significant new investments in the research and development of homegrown, renewable sources of energy.

So I look forward to continuing this work with the Senate so that Congress can send me a bill that I can sign into law, and so that we can say, at long last, that this was the moment when we decided to confront America's energy challenge and reclaim America's future. That's what this vote was about. It was a victory of the future over the past. And that's what America is all about.

Thanks, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:45 p.m. in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to H.R. 2454.

The President's Weekly Address
June 27, 2009

Yesterday the House of Representatives passed a historic piece of legislation that will open the door to a clean energy economy and a better future for America.

For more than three decades, we've talked about our dependence on foreign oil. And for more than three decades, we have seen that dependence grow. We've seen our reliance on fossil fuels jeopardize our national security. We've seen it pollute the air we breathe and endanger our planet. And most of all, we've seen other countries realize a critical truth: The nation that leads in the creation of a clean energy economy will be the nation that leads the 21st century global economy. Now is the time for the United States of America to realize this too. Now is the time for us to lead.

The energy bill that passed the House will finally create a set of incentives that will spark a clean energy transformation in our economy. It will spur the development of low carbon sources of energy, everything from wind, solar, and geothermal power to safer nuclear energy and cleaner coal. It will spur new energy savings, like the efficient windows and other materials that reduce heating costs in the winter and cooling costs in the summer. And most importantly, it will make possible the creation of millions of new jobs.

Make no mistake: This is a jobs bill. We're already seeing why this is true in the clean energy investments we're making through the Recovery Act. In California, 3000 people will be employed to build a new solar plant that in turn will create 1000 permanent jobs. In Michigan, investment in wind turbines and wind technology is expected to create over 2,600 jobs. In Florida, three new solar projects are expected to employ 1400 people.

The list goes on and on, but the point is this: This legislation will finally make clean energy the profitable kind of energy. That will lead to

the creation of new businesses and entire new industries, and that will lead to American jobs that pay well and can't be outsourced. I've often talked about the need to build a new foundation for economic growth so that we don't return to the endless cycle of bubble and bust that led us to this recession. Clean energy and the jobs it creates will be absolutely critical to this new foundation.

This legislation has also been carefully written to address the concerns that many have expressed in the past. Instead of increasing the deficit, it's paid for by the polluters who currently emit dangerous carbon emissions. It provides assistance to businesses and families as they make the gradual transition to clean energy technologies. It gives rural communities and farmers the opportunity to participate in climate solutions and generate new income. And above all, it will protect consumers from the costs of this transition, so that in a decade, the price to the average American will be just about a postage stamp a day.

Because this legislation is so balanced and sensible, it's already attracted a remarkable coalition of consumer and environmental groups, labor and business leaders, Democrats and Republicans. And I want to thank every Member of Congress who put politics aside to support this bill on Friday.

Now my call to every Senator, as well as to every American, is this: We cannot be afraid of the future, and we must not be prisoners of the past. Don't believe the misinformation out there that suggests that there is somehow a contradiction between investing in clean energy and economic growth. It's just not true.

We've been talking about energy for decades. But there's no longer a disagreement over whether our dependence on foreign oil is endangering our security. It is. There's no longer a debate about whether carbon pollution is placing our planet in jeopardy. It's happening. And there's no longer a question about whether the jobs and industries of the 21st century will be centered around clean, renewable energy. The question is, which country will create these jobs and these industries? I want that answer to be the United States of America. And I believe that the American people and the men and women they sent to Congress share that view.

So I want to congratulate the House for passing this bill, and I want to urge the Senate to take this opportunity to come together and meet our obligations to our constituents, to our children, to God's creation, and to future generations.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 2 p.m. on June 26 in the Library at the White House for broadcast on June 27. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 26 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on June 27. In the address, the President referred to H.R. 2454.

Statement on National HIV Testing Day
June 27, 2009

On this 14th commemoration of National HIV Testing Day, I urge Americans to take control of their own health and protect those they love by getting tested for HIV and working to reduce HIV transmission.

One in five Americans currently living with HIV—more than 230,000 people—do not know they have the disease, and the majority of sexually transmitted infections are spread by people who are unaware of their status. But studies show that once people learn they are infected, they take steps to reduce the risk of transmitting HIV to others.

Despite advances in treatment, HIV remains a major threat to the health of our Nation. While its impacts are not evenly

spread—infection rates are particularly high among gay and bisexual men, African Americans, and Latinos—when one of our fellow citizens becomes infected with HIV every 9½ minutes, the epidemic affects all Americans.

That is why I have pledged to develop and implement a comprehensive National HIV/AIDS Strategy (NHAS) that will focus on reducing HIV incidence, increasing access to care, and reducing HIV-related health disparities. The National HIV/AIDS Strategy will also increase awareness and promote greater investment in preventing and treating HIV/AIDS in the U.S., and it will include measurable goals, timelines, and accountability mechanisms, rely on sound science, and build on programs and practices that work.

But Government can only do so much. Each of us must take responsibility for reducing our risk of acquiring or transmitting HIV and for supporting affected individuals and communities. This means getting tested for HIV and working to end the stigma and discrimination people living with HIV face. It means embracing all of our neighbors, gay and straight. And it means responding with compassion to people dealing with addictions and others issues that place them at increased risk for HIV infection. Working together, I am confident that we can stop the spread of HIV and ensure that those affected get the care and support they need.

Statement on the Situation in Honduras
June 28, 2009

I am deeply concerned by reports coming out of Honduras regarding the detention and expulsion of President Mel Zelaya. As the Organization of American States did on Friday, I call on all political and social actors in Honduras to respect democratic norms, the rule of law, and the tenets of the Inter-American Democratic Charter. Any existing tensions and disputes must be resolved peacefully through dialog free from any outside interference.

Remarks on Energy
June 29, 2009

Good afternoon, everybody. Since taking the—excuse me—since taking office, my administration's mounted a sustained response to a historic economic crisis. But even as we take decisive action to repair the damage to our economy, we're also working to build a new foundation for sustained and lasting economic growth.

And we know this won't be easy, but this is a moment where we've been called upon to cast off the old ways of doing business and act boldly to reclaim America's future. Nowhere is this more important than in building a new, clean energy economy, ending our dependence on foreign oil, and limiting the dangerous pollutants that threaten our health and the health of our planet.

And that's precisely what we've begun to do. Thanks to broad coalitions ranging from business to labor, investors to entrepreneurs, Democrats and Republicans, from coal States and coastal States, and all who are willing to take on this challenge, we've come together to achieve more in the past few months to create a new, clean energy economy than we have in decades.

We began with historic investments in the Recovery Act and the Federal budget that will help create hundreds of thousands of jobs doing the work of doubling our country's supply of renewable energy. We're talking about jobs building wind turbines and solar panels, jobs developing next-generation solutions for next-generation cars, jobs upgrading our outdated power grid so it can carry clean, renewable energy from the far-flung areas that harness it to the big cities that use it.

Thanks to a remarkable partnership between automakers, autoworkers, environmental advocates, and States, we created incentives for companies to develop cleaner, more efficient

vehicles and for Americans to drive them. We set in motion a new national policy aimed at both increasing gas mileage and decreasing greenhouse gas pollution for all new cars and trucks sold in the United States. And as a result, we'll save 1.8 billion barrels of oil over the lifetime of the vehicles sold in the next 5 years, the projected equivalent of taking 58 million cars off the road for an entire year.

And we know that even as we seek solutions to our energy problems at home, the solution to global climate change requires American leadership abroad. That's why I've appointed a global climate envoy to help lead our reengagement with the international community as we find sustainable ways to transition to a global low-carbon economy.

And now, just last Friday, the House of Representatives came together to pass an extraordinary piece of legislation that will finally open the door to decreasing our dependence on foreign oil, preventing the worst consequences of climate change, and making clean energy the profitable kind of energy. Thanks to Members of Congress who were willing to place America's progress before the usual Washington politics, this bill will create new businesses, new industries, and millions of new jobs, all without imposing untenable new burdens on the American people or America's businesses. In the months to come, the Senate will take up its version of the energy bill, and I am confident that they too will choose to move this country forward.

So we've gotten a lot done on the energy front over the last 6 months. But even as we're changing the ways we're producing energy, we're also changing the ways we use energy. In fact, one of the fastest, easiest, and cheapest ways to make our economy stronger and cleaner is to make our economy more energy efficient. And that's something that Secretary Chu is working every single day to work through.

We know the benefits. In the late 1970s, the State of California enacted tougher energy-efficiency policies. Over the next three decades, those policies helped create almost 1.5 million jobs. And today, Californians consume 40 percent less energy per person than the national average, which, over time, has prevented the need to build at least 24 new power plants. Think about that. California, producing jobs; their economy keeping pace with the rest of the country; and yet they have been able to maintain their energy usage at a much lower level than the rest of the country.

So that's why we took significant steps in the Recovery Act to invest in energy efficiency measures, from modernizing Federal buildings to helping American families make upgrades to their homes, steps that will create jobs and save taxpayers and consumers money. And that's why I've asked Secretary Chu to lead a new effort at the Department of Energy focusing on implementing more aggressive efficiency standards for common household appliances like refrigerators and ovens, which will spark innovation, save consumers money, and reduce energy demand.

So today we're announcing additional actions to promote energy efficiency across America, actions that will create jobs in the short run and save money and reduce dangerous emissions in the long run. The first step we're taking sets new efficiency standards on fluorescent and incandescent lighting. Now, I know light bulbs may not seem sexy, but this simple action holds enormous promise because 7 percent of all the energy consumed in America is used to light our homes and our businesses. Between 2012 and 2042, these new standards will save consumers up to $4 billion a year, conserve enough electricity to power every home in America for 10 months, reduce emissions equal to the amount produced by 166 million cars each year, and eliminate the need for as many as 14 coal-fired power plants. And by the way, we're going to start here at the White House. Secretary Chu's already started to take a look at our light bulbs, and we're going to see what we need to replace them with energy efficient light bulbs.

And if we want to make our economy run more efficiently, we've also got to make our homes and businesses run more efficiently. And that's why we're also speeding up a $346 million investment under the Recovery Act to expand and accelerate the development, deployment, and use of energy efficient technologies in residential and commercial buildings,

which consume almost 40 percent of the energy we use and contribute to almost 40 percent of the carbon pollution we produce.

We're talking about technologies that are available right now or will soon be available, from lighting to windows, heating to cooling, smart sensors and controls. By adopting these technologies in our homes and businesses, we can make our buildings up to 80 percent more energy efficient or, with additions like solar panels on the roof or geothermal power from underground, even transform them into zero-energy buildings that actually produce as much energy as they consume.

Now, progress like this might seem far-fetched. But the fact is we're not lacking for ideas and innovation. All we lack are the smart policies and the political will to help us put our ingenuity to work. And when we put aside the posturing and the politics, when we put aside attacks that are based less on evidence than on ideology, then a simple choice emerges: We can remain the world's leading importer of oil, or we can become the world's leading exporter of clean energy. We can allow climate change to wreak unnatural havoc, or we can create jobs utilizing low-carbon technologies to prevent its worst effects. We can cede the race for the 21st century, or we can embrace the reality that our competitors already have: The nation that leads the world in creating a new, clean energy economy will be the nation that leads the 21st century global economy. That's our choice: between a slow decline and renewed prosperity; between the past and the future.

The American people have made their choice. They expect us to move forward right now, at this moment of great challenge, and stake our claim on the future; a stronger, cleaner, and more prosperous future where we meet our obligations to our citizens, our children, and to God's creation, and where the United States of America leads once again.

That's the future we're aiming for. I've got a great Secretary of Energy who's helping us achieve it. I want to thank again the House of Representatives for doing the right thing on Friday, and we are absolutely confident that we're going to be able to make more progress in the weeks and months to come.

Thanks, guys.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:12 p.m. in the Grand Foyer at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Special Envoy for Climate Change Todd D. Stern; and Secretary of Energy Steven Chu. The President also referred to H.R. 2454.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Alvaro Uribe Velez of Colombia and an Exchange With Reporters
June 29, 2009

President Obama. Well, I am very pleased to have President Uribe here today with his delegation from Colombia. The relationship between the United States and Colombia has been extremely strong. We've had great cooperation on a whole range of issues, and President Uribe's administration, I think, has, under very difficult circumstances, performed admirably on a whole range of fronts: on security, on reducing the influence of the drug cartels, in improving the economic situation for his people, and stabilizing the country. He has performed with diligence and courage. And so we are grateful for his friendship, and I'm glad that he was able to come and visit us here today.

In our discussions, we talked about a range of issues. We discussed, most prominently, the interests of both countries in moving forward on a free trade agreement. This is something that has been discussed for quite some time. I have instructed Ambassador Kirk, our United States Trade Representative, to begin working closely with President Uribe's team on how we can proceed on a free trade agreement. There are obvious difficulties involved in the process, and there remains work to do, but I'm confident that, ultimately, we can strike a deal that is good for the people of Colombia and good for the people of the United States.

I commended President Uribe on the progress that has been made in human rights in Colombia and dealing with the killings of labor leaders there, and obviously, we've seen a downward trajectory in the deaths of labor unions, and we've seen improvements when it comes to prosecution of those who are carrying out these blatant human rights offenses. President Uribe acknowledges that there remains more work to be done, and we look forward to cooperating with him to continue to improve both the rights of organized labor in Colombia and to protect both labor and civil rights leaders there.

Along those same lines, we, obviously, think that the steps that have already been made on issues like extrajudicial killings and illegal surveillance—that it is important that Colombia pursue a path of rule of law and transparency, and I know that that is something that President Uribe is committed to doing.

We spoke about the regional challenges. The drug trafficking that has been such a cancer in the life of Colombia affects the region as a whole. When I last met with President Calderon of Mexico, he indicated the extraordinary challenges that that country is facing. Mexico and Colombia are not alone in this. Throughout the region in Central and South America, we are seeing this problem. It's important that the United States steps up and cooperates effectively in battling the adverse effects of drug trafficking.

And that includes, by the way, the United States reducing demand for drugs. We have responsibilities. We have responsibilities to reduce the trafficking of guns into the south that help strengthen these cartels and the flows of money and money laundering that, at times, involves not just the south—Southern Hemisphere but also the Northern Hemisphere. And so looking for additional ways that we can cooperate on those issues is very important.

Finally, we spoke about the fact that our relationship is much broader than simply our common enemy in the drug traffickers. We want a proactive, positive agenda for human development throughout the region and inside Colombia. And so exploring ways that we can advance clean energy cooperation, how we can advance efforts to improve child nutrition, reduce infant mortality, expand health care to ordinary people, that is part of what I think President Uribe's comprehensive vision is. That you don't just use military tools to defeat the enemies of progress, but you use a comprehensive approach that includes improvements in rule of law and improvements in people's day-to-day well-being and their opportunities for economic advancement as very powerful weapons to restore order and to ensure that people feel confident in the future.

And so we want to be a partner with Colombia on these issues. I'm grateful, again, for President Uribe's friendship, and I'm confident that we are going to be working diligently in the future to advance the interests of both countries. So thank you very much.

President Uribe. Thank you, Mr. President.

Q. President Obama, can we take a picture with you?

President Obama. Hold on one second. You know, I just realized there may be Spanish press here, and that was a long statement, but if you don't mind, I'm going to go ahead and have that translated just so your people can get it. I'm sorry, I should have slowed down; I forgot.

Q. President Obama, did you talk something about reelection?

President Obama. Hold on. Hold on one second.

[*At this point, President Obama's opening statement was translated into Spanish by an interpreter.*]

President Uribe. President Obama, I want to express our gratitude again to you, to your Cabinet, and to the United States. Colombia, in this alliance with the United States, has received a great help for us to confront the challenges our people have suffered for long, long time.

I have said to President Obama that Colombia, since the middle of the forties, in the last century, has not lived one single day in complete peace. The help of your Government is very important for the hope of the new generations of Colombians. Thank you, President Obama.

We have had opportunity to speak about many topics, as President Obama has said. I said to President Obama, I made to him some comments about confidence in Colombia; about security, the advances, the problems we still face; about investment, its relationship with the free trade agreement as a signal to give confidence in Colombia; and about social cohesion, the advances in education, in microlending, in health; the problems we still face, problems in poverty, in income distribution.

And in the case of human rights, Colombia is a rule of law in the utmost expression of public opinion participation. We—I am the first with a duty to support of our armed forces, but for that reason of their honor, every soldier, every policeman in Colombia understands that we need credibility for this policing of democratic security. And credibility depends on effectiveness and on transparency, and transparency is a question of human rights. Therefore, we are open, we are very receptive, to receive any advice, any suggestion on how we are going to fulfill our goal of ceasing civil violations of human rights in Colombia.

About surveillance, I have said to President Obama that during our administration, we have restructured 427 state agencies, and we are in the process to restructure the state agency for surveillance. We hope to issue these decrees in the coming 3 weeks, and we hope that we can solve the endemic problems of these institutions—of this institution for good.

I have said to President Obama about the importance of the help of the United States for us and the region as a whole to advance in social cohesion; help directly from the United States or through the multilateral banks. For instance, in education and in child nutrition, we have advanced a lot, but we lack infrastructure; coverage has surpassed infrastructure. In child nutrition, we have advanced a lot, but we lack coverage in education for those under 6, not to mention other of our problems. But we have a recognition to advance in security, human rights, state restructure, to advance in economics, to advance in social cohesion. And for all these things, it is very important to have this permanent support of President Obama, of the Government of the United States, of the Congress of the United State.

My gratitude, again, President Obama, and we are waiting for you in Colombia.

President Obama. Thank you.

Q. President Obama——

Q. Did you talk about the reelection——

President Obama. Hold on, hold on. We're going to—we only have time for two questions. I'm going to call on a U.S. reporter, and then, President Uribe, you can make a decision on which one of the Colombian reporters you want to call on. [*Laughter*]

So, Doug Palmer of Reuters.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

President Obama. Doug. Hold on, please. Doug.

Situation in Honduras/Colombia-U.S. Free Trade Agreement

Q. Right here. Thank you very much. You talked about the FTA, and you also talked about some of the obstacles to getting the FTA through Congress. I wonder, do you have a sense of how close Colombia is to where it needs to be in order for you to send the agreement to Congress? Is that something that can be accomplished this year?

And then, I also wondered if you would comment on the coup in Honduras and what additional steps the U.S. might be considering there.

President Obama. Well, let me, first of all, speak about the coup in Honduras, because this was a topic of conversation between myself and President Uribe.

All of us have great concerns about what's taken place there. President Zelaya was democratically elected. He had not yet completed his term. We believe that the coup was not legal and that President Zelaya remains the President of Honduras, the democratically elected President there. In that, we have joined all the countries in the region, including Colombia and the Organization of American States.

I think it's—it would be a terrible precedent if we start moving backwards into the era in which we are seeing military coups as a means of political transition rather than democratic elections. The region has made enormous

progress over the last 20 years in establishing democratic traditions in Central America and Latin America. We don't want to go back to a dark past. The United States has not always stood as it should with some of these fledgling democracies, but over the last several years, I think both Republicans and Democrats in the United States have recognized that we always want to stand with democracy, even if the results don't always mean that the leaders of those countries are favorable towards the United States. And that is a tradition that we want to continue.

So we are very clear about the fact that President Zelaya is the democratically elected President, and we will work with the regional organizations like OAS and with other international institutions to see if we can resolve this in a peaceful way.

With respect to the free trade agreement, obviously, a lot of work has already been done on the free trade agreement, and we are hopeful that we can move forward to completion. I don't have a strict timetable, because I'm going to have to consult with Congress, obviously, on this issue. We've got a lot on our plates, if you haven't noticed. And I think that the burden is not simply on Colombia; I think Colombia has done a lot of excellent work. It is a matter of getting both countries to a place where their legislatures feel confident that it will be, ultimately, to the economic benefit of these countries.

I have noted a special concern that is bipartisan and shared both by this administration and Congress that the human rights issues in Colombia get resolved. President Uribe has assured me that he is interested in resolving those issues. And, as I said, great progress has been made. I trust that we can make more progress. And I think that will help shape the overall environment in which this issue is being debated in Congress.

Okay? You want to call on——

Q. Presidente——

President Uribe. Entonces, Natalia Orozco.

Central America-U.S. Relations/South America-U.S. Relations

Q. President Obama, President Chavez, it's not a secret, wanted to be reelected; President Zelaya wanted to be reelected; and President Uribe hasn't decided yet. Are you worried about what relation of those leader, and can have effects in the Western Hemisphere? Do you have a message for them?

President Obama. Well, first of all, I think it's very important that, in all these countries, it's not for the United States to make these decisions; it's for the people of these countries to make these decisions. And one of the clear policies that we want to put forward is that we stand on the side of democracy, sovereignty, and self-determination.

We know that our experience in the United States is that two terms works for us, and that after 8 years, usually the American people want a change. I related to President Uribe the fact that our most revered President, or at least one of our two most revered Presidents, George Washington, part of what made him so great was not just being the founder of our country, but also the fact that at a time when he could have stayed President for life, he made a decision that after service, he was able to step aside and return to civilian life. And that set a precedent then for the future.

But as I said, each country, I think, has to make these decisions on their own, and I think what's ultimately most important is that the people feel a sense of legitimacy and ownership, and that this is not something imposed on them from the top, that it's not—does not involve manipulations of the electorate or rigging of the electoral process or repression of opposition voices, but that whatever is determined is done in an open, transparent way so that people feel confident that whoever is in power represents their voices and their interests.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

President Uribe. No, let me——

Q. [*Inaudible*]

President Obama. She just wants a picture——

Q. [*Inaudible*]

President Uribe. No, but let me make some comments about this question. I brought to the table some topics that I call topics of internal debate in Colombia at this moment. And one of the topics I brought to talk about it with President Obama is this topic. And I want to summarize.

I said to President Obama, first, I am concerned, because I am a member of one generation of the four or five generations that have not lived one single day in peace in Colombia or prosperity. Therefore, I consider that Colombia needs to extend in that time security, democratic values, investment in social responsibility and social cohesion, with adjustments.

I don't believe in the stagnation, and I don't believe in gross changes. I believe in one goal, in one mission, with dynamism, with daily adjustments. And I have said in the second point of this comment that I consider that this is—[*inaudible*]—it is necessary to extend these policies. It is not convenient to perpetuate the precedent.

And I have said to President Obama what I want to say to you. Colombia is a country of solid democratic institutions. When we speak about institutions, we cannot speak in abstract about institutions. We have to speak about institutions in concrete terms. We have 1,102 mayors directly elected by the people; 32 Governors. The regions in Colombia invest 51 percent of the public expenses. My Government has built governments with all the regional Governors and mayors regardless their political allegiance, and they have many, many political allegiance.

The justice administration is independent in Colombia. Colombia has solid free press. Colombia has bodies, independent bodies, for control. Colombia is a country with very solid institutions.

I beg you, journalists, to separate the convenience or inconvenience of perpetuating the precedent with the qualification of our institutions. Anyway, our democratic institutions are totally solid.

President Obama. Well—and the other thing I should say is that if I were to serve two terms, I'm fairly confident that I would not have the 70 percent approval rating that President Uribe has. [*Laughter*]

All right, thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:43 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A reporter referred to President Hugo Chavez Frias of Venezuela.

Remarks at a Reception Honoring Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month

June 29, 2009

The President. Hey. Good to see you. I'm waiting for FLOTUS here. FLOTUS always politics more than POTUS.

The First Lady. No, you move too slow. [*Laughter*]

The President. It is great to see everybody here today, and they're just—I've got a lot of friends in the room, but there are some people I want to especially acknowledge. First of all, somebody who helped ensure that we are in the White House, Steve Hildebrand. Please give Steve a big round of applause. Where's Steve? He's around here somewhere.

The new Chair of the Export-Import Bank, Fred Hochberg; where's Fred? There's Fred. Good to see you, Fred. Our Director of the Institute of Education Sciences at DOE, John Easton; where's John? A couple of special friends—Bishop Gene Robinson; where's Gene? Hey, Gene. Ambassador Michael Guest is here. Ambassador Jim Hormel is here. Oregon Secretary of State Kate Brown is here.

All of you are here. Welcome to your White House. So——

Audience member. [*Inaudible*] [*Laughter*]

The President. Somebody asked from the Lincoln Bedroom here. [*Laughter*] You knew I was from Chicago too. [*Laughter*]

It's good to see so many friends and familiar faces, and I deeply appreciate the support I've

received from so many of you; Michelle appreciates it. And I want you to know that you have our support as well. And you have my thanks for the work you do every day in pursuit of equality on behalf of the millions of people in this country who work hard and care about their communities and who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.

Now, this struggle, I don't need to tell you, is incredibly difficult, although I think it's important to consider the extraordinary progress that we have made. There are unjust laws to overturn and unfair practices to stop. And though we've made progress, there are still fellow citizens, perhaps neighbors or even family members and loved ones, who still hold fast to worn arguments and old attitudes; who fail to see your families like their families; and who would deny you the rights that most Americans take for granted. And I know this is painful, and I know it can be heartbreaking.

And yet all of you continue, leading by the force of the arguments you make but also by the power of the example that you set in your own lives as parents and friends, as PTA members and leaders in the community. And that's important, and I'm glad that so many LGBT families could join us today. For we know that progress depends not only on changing laws but also changing hearts. And that real, transformative change never begins in Washington.

[*At this point, a cell phone rang.*]

The President. Whose duck is back there? [*Laughter*]

The First Lady. It's a duck.

The President. There's a duck quacking in there somewhere. [*Laughter*] Where do you guys get these ring tones, by the way? [*Laughter*] I'm just curious. [*Laughter*]

Indeed, that's the story of the movement for fairness and equality, not just for those who are gay, but for all those in our history who've been denied the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; who've been told that the full blessings and opportunities of this country were closed to them. It's the story of progress sought by those who started off with little influence or power, by men and women who brought about change through quiet, personal acts of compassion and courage and sometimes defiance wherever and whenever they could.

That's the story of a civil rights pioneer who's here today. Frank Kameny, who was fired—[*applause*]—Frank was fired from his job as an astronomer for the Federal Government simply because he was gay. And in 1965, he led a protest outside the White House, which was at the time both an act of conscience but also an act of extraordinary courage. And so we are proud of you, Frank, and we are grateful to you for your leadership.

It's the story of the Stonewall protests, which took place 40 years ago this week, when a group of citizens, with few options and fewer supporters, decided they'd had enough and refused to accept a policy of wanton discrimination. And two men who were at those protests are here today. Imagine the journey that they've traveled.

It's the story of an epidemic that decimated a community and the gay men and women who came to support one another and save one another, and who continue to fight this scourge, and who've demonstrated before the world that different kinds of families can show the same compassion and support in a time of need; that we all share the capacity to love.

So this story, this struggle, continues today, for even as we face extraordinary challenges as a nation, we cannot and will not put aside issues of basic equality. We seek an America in which no one feels the pain of discrimination based on who you are or who you love.

And I know that many in this room don't believe that progress has come fast enough, and I understand that. It's not for me to tell you to be patient, any more than it was for others to counsel patience to African Americans who were petitioning for equal rights a half century ago.

But I say this: We have made progress, and we will make more. And I want you to know that I expect and hope to be judged not by words, not by promises I've made, but by the promises that my administration keeps. And by the time you receive—[*applause*]. We've been in office 6 months now. I suspect that by the time this administration is over, I think you

guys will have pretty good feelings about the Obama administration—[*inaudible*].

Now, while there is much more work to do, we can point to important changes we've already put in place since coming into office. I've signed a memorandum requiring all agencies to extend as many Federal benefits as possible to LGBT families as current law allows. And these are benefits that will make a real difference for Federal employees and Foreign Service officers who are so often treated as if their families don't exist. And I'd like to note that one of the key voices in helping us develop this policy is John Berry, our Director of the Office of Personnel Management, who is here today. And I want to thank John Berry.

I've called on Congress to repeal the so-called Defense of Marriage Act to help end discrimination against same-sex couples in this country. Now, I want to add, we have a duty to uphold existing law, but I believe we must do so in a way that does not exacerbate old divides. And fulfilling this duty in upholding the law in no way lessens my commitment to reversing this law. I've made that clear.

I'm also urging Congress to pass the domestic partners benefits and obligations act, which will guarantee the full range of benefits, including health care, to LGBT couples and their children. My administration's also working hard to pass an employee nondiscrimination bill and hate crimes bill, and we're making progress on both fronts. Judy and Dennis Shepard, as well as their son Logan, are here today. I met with Judy in the Oval Office in May, and I assured her, and I assure all of you, that we are going to pass an inclusive hate crimes bill into law, a bill named for their son Matthew.

In addition, my administration is committed to rescinding the discriminatory ban on entry to the United States based on HIV status. The Office of Management and Budget just concluded a review of a proposal to repeal this entry ban, which is a first and very big step towards ending this policy. And we all know that HIV/AIDS continues to be a public health threat in many communities, including right here in the District of Columbia. And that's why this past Saturday, on National HIV Testing Day, I was proud once again to encourage all Americans to know their status and get tested the way Michelle and I know our status and got tested.

And finally, I want to say a word about "don't ask, don't tell." As I said before, I'll say it again, I believe "don't ask, don't tell" doesn't contribute to our national security. In fact, I believe preventing patriotic Americans from serving their country weakens our national security. My administration is already working with the Pentagon and Members of the House and the Senate on how we'll go about ending this policy, which will require an act of Congress.

Someday, I'm confident we'll look back at this transition and ask why it generated such angst, but as Commander in Chief in a time of war, I do have a responsibility to see that this change is administered in a practical way and a way that takes over the long term. That's why I've asked the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to develop a plan for how to thoroughly implement a repeal.

I know that every day that passes without a resolution is a deep disappointment to those men and women who continue to be discharged under this policy—patriots who often possess critical language skills and years of training and who've served this country well. But what I hope is that these cases underscore the urgency of reversing this policy not just because it's the right thing to do, but because it is essential for our national security.

Now, even as we take these steps, we must recognize that real progress depends not only on the laws we change but, as I said before, on the hearts we open. For if we're honest with ourselves, we'll acknowledge that there are good and decent people in this country who don't yet fully embrace their gay brothers and sisters, not yet.

That's why I've spoken about these issues not just in front of you, but in front of unlikely audiences: in front of African American church members, in front of other audiences that have traditionally resisted these changes. And that's what I'll continue to do so. That's how we'll shift attitudes. That's how we'll honor the legacy of leaders like Frank and many others who have refused to accept anything less than full and equal citizenship.

Now, 40 years ago, in the heart of New York City at a place called the Stonewall Inn, a group of citizens, including a few who are here today, as I said, defied an unjust policy and awakened a nascent movement. It was the middle of the night. The police stormed the bar, which was known for being one of the few spots where it was safe to be gay in New York. Now, raids like this were entirely ordinary, because it was considered obscene and illegal to be gay; no establishments for gays and lesbians could get licenses to operate. The nature of these businesses, combined with the vulnerability of the gay community itself, meant places like Stonewall, and the patrons inside, were often the victims of corruption and blackmail.

Now, ordinarily, the raid would come and the customers would disperse. But on this night, something was different. There are many accounts of what happened, and much has been lost to history, but what we do know is this: People didn't leave. They stood their ground. And over the course of several nights, they declared that they had seen enough injustice in their time. This was an outpouring against not just what they experienced that night, but what they had experienced their whole lives. And as with so many movements, it was also something more. It was at this defining moment that folks who had been marginalized rose up to challenge not just how the world saw them, but also how they saw themselves.

As we've seen so many times in history, once that spirit takes hold, there is little that can stand in its way. And the riots at Stonewall gave way to protests, and protests gave way to a movement, and the movement gave way to a transformation that continues to this day. It continues when a partner fights for her right to sit at the hospital bedside of a woman she loves. It continues when a teenager is called a name for being different, and says, "So what if I am?" It continues in your work and in your activism, in your fight to freely live your lives to the fullest.

In one year after the protests, a few hundred gays and lesbians and their supporters gathered at the Stonewall Inn to lead a historic march for equality. But when they reached Central Park, the few hundred that began the march had swelled to 5,000. Something had changed, and it would never change back.

The truth is, when these folks protested at Stonewall 40 years ago, no one could have imagined that you or, for that matter, I would be standing here today. So we are all witnesses to monumental changes in this country. That should give us hope, but we cannot rest. We must continue to do our part to make progress, step by step, law by law, mind by changing mind. And I want you to know that in this task, I will not only be your friend, I will continue to be an ally and a champion and a President who fights with you and for you.

Thanks very much, everybody. God bless you. We are—thank you. It's a little stuffed in here. We're going to open—we opened up that door. We're going to walk this way, and then we're going to come around, and we'll see some of you over there, all right?

The First Lady. Out there? [*Laughter*]

The President. But out there. [*Laughter*]

But thank you very much, all, for being here. Enjoy the White House. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:35 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Steve Hildebrand, deputy campaign manager, Obama 2008; Fred P. Hochberg, Chairman of the Board of Directors and President, Export-Import Bank of the United States; Bishop V. Gene Robinson, Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire; former U.S. Ambassador to Romania Michael E. Guest; former U.S. Ambassador to Luxembourg James C. Hormel; Jerry Hoose and Tommy Lanigan-Schmidt, participants of the Stonewall Inn riots; and Judy and Dennis Shepard, parents of Matthew Shepard, who was attacked and killed in October 1998. The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month proclamation of June 1 is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at a Democratic National Committee Fundraiser
June 29, 2009

Thank you. All right everybody have a seat, settle down—I've milked that enough. [*Laughter*] What a joy it is to see so many good friends, people who, it's no exaggeration, without whom we would not be here. And there are just a lot of folks in this audience who took an early bet on somebody who, I think the professionals didn't give much of a shot at winning the Presidency, and I'm grateful to all of you. All of you I'm happy to see.

There are four people I want to acknowledge just because they're carrying a little extra burden right now. First of all, somebody who was great for our campaign, is now doing great work for the DNC, please give Jane Stetson a big round of applause. Thank you Jane. Our fearless leader during the campaign, who never wavered, never waffled, and cracked the whip with grace and good cheer, Penny Pritzker. Somebody who was there for us day in, day out, Andy Tobias.

And somebody who—I think some of you know this—this was the first elected official outside of Illinois to endorse my campaign. Now think about this, this is in February of 2007. He is the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia. He stands beside me in Richmond, the seat of the old Confederacy, and says, "I'm endorsing Barack Obama for President of the United States." He's been there ever since. He's my friend, a great Governor, a great DNC leader, Tim Kaine. He hadn't been in office that long. He didn't know any better. [*Laughter*] And Anne, I think, was whispering in his ear. But Tim has just been an extraordinary friend, and he is now just doing an extraordinary job on behalf of the DNC.

As I said before, without you, we would not be here, because all of you were here in the beginning when it was hard. When people in this town didn't give us much of a chance, you stuck in there. And you didn't just fundraise; you put your hearts and souls into this campaign. I look at every single table, and there are people here who took their families, took their grandparents, took their cousins and nephews, and went into Iowa and went to New Hampshire and campaigned and knocked on doors and insisted to skeptics that now was the time for change in America, and lo and behold we're bringing about some change in America.

We knew from the start that change wouldn't be easy. But we also understood we were living in extraordinary times, and that we've been asked to confront challenges of a size and a scope that hadn't been seen in recent history, a set of challenges that few generations of Americans have ever been asked to confront: two wars, a debilitating recession, a global financial crisis, a crisis that faces the planet when it comes to climate change.

And we understood that meeting these challenges was going to require some tough choices. It required us to do what was right, even if it wasn't necessarily always popular, at least not at first. It required taking on the status quo in Washington that unfortunately tends to favor inertia over action and tinkering over real reform. And we knew that it would require looking beyond the next news cycle, and the next election to the next generation, to do what we had to do to ensure that our children and grandchildren inherit an America that is as ascendant, as bold, as imaginative as the America that we inherited from our parents.

Now that's not just a responsibility. Meeting these challenges is a privilege and an opportunity, for in our hands lies the chance to shape the world for good and for ill. So let's just take a look at what we've done so far over the last 6 months, because in the blur of activity, I think we may be taking some things for granted.

Not 1 month into this administration, we responded to this financial crisis with the most sweeping economic recovery plan in our Nation's history; a plan that has already provided tax relief to 95 percent of working families, as we had promised, a plan that's saving jobs and creating new ones in construction and clean energy and small business across the country.

We passed a budget resolution that helps to cut our deficit in half while laying the foundations for all the building blocks required for a post-bubble economy: reforming our health

care system, initiating a clean energy agenda, revamping our education system so that our kids can compete in the 21st century.

We lifted a ban on Federal funding of stem cell research. We expanded the Children's Health Insurance Program to cover 11 million children in need. We passed a national service bill to create hundreds of thousands of opportunities for people to serve their communities. We passed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, the first bill I signed, so that equal pay for equal work is a reality all across this country.

That was just the beginning. We passed a series of reforms that won't just change policy in Washington, but changes how Washington work. We brought together auto executives and labor unions and environmental groups, Democrats and Republicans, together to set national fuel efficiency standards for our cars and trucks for the very first time in history. We will save 1.8 billion barrels of oil as a consequence of this agreement. We passed bipartisan legislation to help homeowners and to crack down on predatory lenders who are seeking to take advantage of them.

We passed laws to protect consumers from unfair rate hikes and abusive fees leveled by many credit card companies, a law that will eliminate waste in our defense budget and save taxpayers billions of dollars. And after decades of opposition, we passed legislation that will prevent tobacco companies from marketing to our children.

It's not bad for 6 months. So we should feel proud for what we've accomplished, but we can't be satisfied. We should feel confident in the future, but not complacent. We can't be content with the present. Not when there are workers that are still worried about losing their jobs or their homes or their health care. Not when there are so many children out there who aren't getting the skills that they need to compete in the 21st century. Not when justice is still elusive for too many in our society.

This is when it gets hard. This is when the criticism gets louder, when the pundits grow impatient, when cynicism seeks to reassert itself. This is when we hear the same voices advocating the same policies that got us into this mess in the first place. This is where we hear that change just isn't possible.

So this is exactly the moment when we need to fight the hardest. This is going to be the time when we need to band together and when we decide we're going to do what's right for the country and deliver the change that we promised when I was elected last November.

Now is the time to build the schools that meet high standards and close the achievement gap and prepare our kids for the challenges of the 21st century. This is where we start rewarding teachers for performance and create new pathways for advancement. And this is when we start reaching that goal that I've set for 2020 that we once again are going to have the highest college graduation rates of any advanced country in the world because we know that's what it's going to take to compete in a 21st-century economy.

Now is the time when we're going to pass comprehensive energy legislation that caps carbon emissions and creates energy efficiency and millions of new jobs. On Friday, the House of Representatives took a historic vote and ignored the naysayers and said we are going to reach for the future and not look backwards, not cling to the past.

I don't know about you, but I have never looked at a American history book that praised America for not taking a chance. That said: The thing that really stands out about America is we just stood pat back in the agricultural era. When things were getting industrial, we decided no, we're not going to change. When the industrial era started moving into the information era—no, no, no, no, we can't handle the Internet; we're not going to do that.

That's not who America is. You keep on hearing these folks making these arguments about how we've got to be fearful of the future. I'm not interested in being afraid of the future. I'm interested in seizing the future for our children and our grandchildren, and that's what this bill is about.

Now is the time for us to finally do something about health care. We have been talking about it enough; we have had commissions; we have had white papers; we have had blue

ribbons. We have talked about it and talked about it, and now it's time to act.

And for those who would oppose our efforts, just turn to them and say, "Is there any way for you to defend the status quo?" And you'll hear a bunch of muttering and yammering, and they'll say, "Well, well, we agree with reform too." Okay, if you agree with reform, then step up, because we know that right now, families are being crushed by the cost of health care. Right now, businesses are being crushed by the cost of health care. Right now, our government is going bankrupt at the State and Federal level because of health care. Right now, 46 million people are without insurance.

Right now there's a woman in Wisconsin that I had a chance to meet who's got breast cancer and two small children. She's 36 years old. She had a job; her husband has a job. She's got health insurance, and she still has $50,000 in debt. And instead of worrying about how to get well, all she can think about is whether she's going to be leaving a legacy of debt to her family if she doesn't survive this cancer.

That's not the kind of country that any of us are willing to accept. We know we can do better. And so I am saying to Congress and I'm saying to the American people, don't be afraid. Let us step forward. We know what needs to happen. We know that if we start applying commonsense rules to raise quality and reduce costs, that we can have a health care system that is uniquely American but finally provides coverage for all and is sustainable for the long term. You're going to help us make this happen. It's going to happen this year. We are going to have health care this year. We're going to have health care this year. [*Applause*] We're going to have health care this year.

We are going to have health care this year, we are going to reform the financial industry this year, and we are going to get energy done this year. And we are going to—and then we got a whole 'nother year after that. [*Laughter*]

But you've heard the argument. People say, oh, this is overload; we can't do this much. And I keep on trying to explain to people, I don't do this just for fun. [*Laughter*] If the health care system was working, we wouldn't remake it. If we weren't dependent on foreign oil and watching the Arctic Circle melt, then we wouldn't go to the trouble of passing a energy bill. The naysayers seem to think somehow that we can just keep on doing what we're doing, and the American people understand we can't.

But, the American people are also justifiably concerned about how change is going to come about. And that's completely understandable because we are going through the toughest economic times in our living memory. And most of the people here enjoy great good fortune. There are a whole lot of folks out there who are just barely hanging on. And so when they hear the fearmongerers suggesting that this is going to cost them more money or this is going to cost them jobs or their health care is going to be taken away from them, and this is all a plot to grow the government, of course they take pause because, you know, they haven't been given a real fair shake for quite some time, and Washington hasn't been working for them, and most of the legislation that's coming out of this town has been a bait-and-switch on them. They've been promised one thing, and they've gotten something else. So I understand why there's going to be some skepticism out there.

And by the way, this stuff is not going to be easy. There are going to be bumps in the road, and there are going to be times where people get impatient. There are going to be times where folks lose heart. There are going to be times where we feel like maybe we bit off too much, and we can't get to our goal.

And when we have those times, I just want you to know that that all sounds pretty familiar, doesn't it? Because when Tim announced that he was supporting my campaign, the odds of us getting that done were a lot higher than the odds of getting health care done or the odds of getting energy done or the odds of reforming our financial institutions.

I want everybody here to understand that at this moment we have the opportunity to seize the future. And as painful as that is sometimes and as difficult as that is sometimes, it is inherent in the American spirit that we go forward, we don't look backwards. That's what this party is about; that's what this administration is about. You've proven that's what you're about. So help

me. We're going to get there for the American people.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:08 p.m. at the Mandarin Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Jane Stetson, national finance chair, Democratic National Committee; Penny S. Pritzker, chairman and founder, Pritzker Realty Group, in her former capacity as national finance chair of the President's 2008 election campaign; Andrew Tobias, treasurer, Democratic National Committee; and Gov. Timothy M. Kaine of Virginia, in his capacity as chairman, Democratic National Committee, and his wife Anne Holton. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on June 30.

Remarks on Community Service Programs
June 30, 2009

The President. Thank you very much. Well, it is wonderful to see all these do-gooders in one room. [*Laughter*] And it is always a dangerous thing trying to follow Geoffrey Canada. [*Laughter*] But I thank you all for being here.

Withdrawal of U.S. Troops From Iraq

Before we begin the subject of today's gathering, I want to say a few words about an important milestone that we've reached in Iraq. Today American troops have transferred control of all Iraqi cities and towns to Iraq's Government and security forces. And this transition was agreed to last year as part of our status of forces agreement with the sovereign Iraqi Government. It's a part of our strategy to responsibly end the war by removing all American combat brigades from Iraq by next September and all of our troops from Iraq by the end of 2011.

So the Iraqi people are rightly treating this day as a cause for celebration. This is an important step forward, as a sovereign and united Iraq continues to take control of its own destiny. And with this progress comes responsibility. Iraq's future is in the hands of its own people, and Iraq's leaders must now make some hard choices necessary to resolve key political questions, to advance opportunity, and to provide security for their towns and their cities. In this effort, America will be a strong partner to the Iraqi people on behalf of their security and prosperity.

Now, make no mistake: There will be difficult days ahead. We know that the violence in Iraq will continue. We see that already in the senseless bombing in Kirkuk earlier today. And there are those who will test Iraq's security forces and the resolve of the Iraqi people through more sectarian bombings and the murder of innocent civilians. But I'm confident that those forces will fail. The future belongs to those who build, not those who destroy. And today's transition is further proof that those who have tried to pull Iraq into the abyss of disunion and civil war are on the wrong side of history.

Finally, the very fact that Iraqis are celebrating this day is a testament to the courage, the capability, and commitment of every single American who has served in Iraq. That's worth applauding. Through tour after tour of duty, our troops have overcome every obstacle to extend this precious opportunity to the Iraqi people. These women and men are not always in the headlines, but they're in our hearts and prayers, and we will forever honor their selfless service and sacrifice, as well as the service and sacrifice of their families. And there is more work to be done, but we've made important progress in supporting a sovereign, stable, and self-reliant Iraq. And everyone who's served there, both in uniform as well as our civilians, deserves our thanks.

Now, it's fitting that we're here today to talk about what each of us can do to lift up this Nation, because our troops' sacrifice challenges all of us to do what we can do to be better citizens. That's what the people that you've heard from already are doing every single day.

So I want to start off thanking Geoffrey Canada, Robert Chambers, Pat Christen—who's here with one of Hope Lab's

student testers, Richard Ross—Richard, wave to everybody—[*laughter*]—for speaking with us about the extraordinary work their organizations are doing in their communities. And I want to thank Richard and Vanessa Nunez for sharing their stories with us today. Thank you very much. You both clearly have very bright futures ahead of you.

I want to acknowledge our outstanding Education Secretary, Arne Duncan. He's worth giving a round of applause. As well as, if I'm not mistaken, Congressman Jim Moran is here. There he is, right here in the front, with his daughter Dorothy. I want to thank Steve Goldsmith for moderating. We were discussing the fact that at Harvard—Vanessa, you were there—how long ago was that? Fifteen years ago? We were together on a conference talking about this very issue. And so it's nice to see Steve, one of the outstanding mayors at the time and now continuing to do great work helping people to think about how we can all fulfill our civic responsibilities more effectively. So thank you very much.

I also want to thank Dave Cieslewicz—I want to make sure I say that properly—of Madison, Wisconsin, and Mayor Sara Presler of Flagstaff, Arizona, for their commitment as well. Please give them a big round of applause.

And finally, I want to thank all of you here today for everything you're doing to find new solutions to some of our oldest, toughest problems. I know what you do is not easy. I know that for many of you, the hours are long, the pay could be better, let's face it. But I also know the difference that each of you make. I know the lives that you change every single day. You teach us that there's no such thing as a lost cause if you're willing to be creative and challenge the conventional wisdom and take some risks; if you're willing to try, and fail, and then try again until you find something that works. And today I want to recognize that pioneering spirit and thank you all for the contributions that you're making to our communities.

What you all do is important in any year. But at this particular moment, when we're facing challenges unlike any we've seen in our lifetime, it's absolutely critical, because while we're working hard to rebuild our economy and help people who are struggling, let's face it, there's only so much that Washington can do. Government can't do everything and be everywhere, nor should it be.

For example, Government can help rebuild schools—and Arne Duncan is working as hard as anybody—but we need new ways to teach our children and train our teachers and get parents more involved in their children's education. Government can reform our health care system, but we need innovative approaches to help people manage their illnesses and lead healthier lives. Government can invest in clean energy, but we need new initiatives to get people to train for green jobs and make their homes and offices more energy efficient.

So if anyone out there is waiting for Government to solve all their problems, they're going to be disappointed. Because ultimately, the best solutions don't come from the top-down, not from Washington, they come from the bottom-up in each and every one of our communities.

As some of you know, I first saw this years ago when I worked as a community organizer in Chicago—neighborhoods devastated by steel plant closings. And I spent hours going door to door, meeting with anyone who would talk to me, asking people about their struggles and what an organization could do to help. And it was slow, laborious going. We had plenty of setbacks and failed more often than we succeeded. But we listened to the people in the community and we learned from them and got them engaged and got them involved. And slowly, block by block, we began to turn those neighborhoods around, fighting for job training and better housing and more opportunity for young people.

The lesson I learned then still holds true today: That folks who are struggling don't simply need more Government bureaucracy; that top-down, one-size-fits-all program usually doesn't end up fitting anybody. People don't need somebody out in Washington to tell them how to solve their problems, especially when the best solutions are often right there in their own neighborhoods, just waiting to be discovered.

So right now, in communities across America, people are hard at work developing and running programs that could be the next Harlem

Children's Zone or the next Genesys Works or the next Hope Lab—and idealistic young people like Wendy Kopp who refused to listen to skeptics years ago and pushed ahead to bring her vision for Teach for America to life.

We've got young-at-heart people like Robert Chambers, who finish out careers in business or health care or education, and instead of transitioning into retirement, they're just too busy, they're too restless, so they come back for an encore, plowing a lifetime of experience into helping people in need. We've got people from all backgrounds, all walks of life succeeding where others have failed, getting real, measurable results, changing the way we think about some of our toughest problems.

The bottom line is clear: Solutions to America's challenges are being developed every day at the grass roots, and Government shouldn't be supplanting those efforts, it should be supporting those efforts. Instead of wasting taxpayer money on programs that are obsolete or ineffective, Government should be seeking out creative, results-oriented programs like the ones here today and helping them replicate their efforts across America.

So if the Harlem's Children's Zone can turn around neighborhoods in New York, then why not Detroit or San Antonio or Los Angeles or Indianapolis? If Bonnie CLAC can help working people purchase cars and manage their finances in New Hampshire, then they can probably do it in Vermont or all across New England or all across America.

Now, it's not going to be easy to scale up some of these great ideas. If it was easy, you would have already done it, and you wouldn't be here today, except maybe to just check out the White House. [*Laughter*] It's hard, but it's also critical. And it's absolutely possible, if we're willing to work together to give organizations like these the resources they need to reach their fullest potential and have their fullest impact, and if we're able to ensure that best practices are shared all across the country, that we've set up a strong network of ideas. And that's precisely the idea behind the $50 million innovation fund included in the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, an initiative designed to assist community solutions like these that we're asking Congress to fund this year.

We're going to use this fund to find the most promising nonprofits in America. We'll examine their data and rigorously evaluate their outcomes. We'll invest in those with the best results that are most likely to provide a good return on our taxpayer dollars. And we'll require that they get matching investments from the private sector, from businesses and foundations and philanthropists, to make those taxpayer dollars go even further.

And today I'm announcing that I'll be asking Melody Barnes, who is our Director of the Domestic Policy Council, and our innovation team to lead this process, traveling across the country to discover and evaluate the very best programs in our communities.

And we won't just be looking at the usual suspects in the usual places. We won't just be seeking the programs that everybody already knows about, but we also want to find those hidden gems that haven't yet gotten the attention they deserve. And we'll be looking in all sorts of communities, rural, urban, and suburban, in every region of this country, because we know that great ideas and outstanding programs are everywhere, and it's up to us to find them.

We're going to take this new approach, this new way of doing business, Government-wide. So we've already set up a What Works Fund at the Department of Education, $650 million in the Recovery Act that we'll be investing in the most successful, highest impact initiatives in our school districts and communities. It's not just going to be the usual formulas here. From pioneering teacher training programs and efforts to bring new technologies into our schools, to early learning programs and programs to help at-risk kids, these are the kinds of initiatives that Arne and his staff at the Department are looking to support.

At the Department of Health and Human Services, we're working on a new home-visiting initiative connecting nurses and other trained professionals with at-risk families to ensure that children get a healthy, safe, and smart start to life. We'll be seeking out the very best programs to achieve those

goals—ones with the strongest record of success—and we'll test promising approaches to see what works and what doesn't.

So all of this represents a new kind of partnership between government and the nonprofit sector, but I can tell you right now, that partnership isn't complete and it won't be successful without help from the private sector. And that's why I'm glad that there are some deep pockets in the audience here—[*laughter*]—foundations, corporations, and individuals. You need to be part of this effort as well, and that's my challenge to the private sector today.

Our nonprofits can provide the solutions. Our Government can rigorously evaluate these solutions and invest limited taxpayer dollars in ones that work, but we need those of you from the private sector to step up as well. We need you to provide that critical seed capital to launch these ideas. We need you to provide those matching funds to help them grow, and we need you to serve as a partner, providing strategic advice and other resources to help them succeed. If we work together, if we all go all in here, think about the difference we can make. Think about the impact we could have with just the organizations represented in this room.

We've got Jim McCorkell here from Admission Possible, a group that helps promising young people from low-income families attend college. Ninety-nine percent of the Admission Possible class of 2008 got into college—99 percent. Where's Jim? Where's Jim? There he is, back there. The vast majority stay in college and earn their degrees. Admission Possible operates in just two States now. So imagine if it was 10 or 20 or 50.

We've got Alfa Demmellash here from Rising Tide Capital. Where is Alfa? Right over there. Did I pronounce your name right?

Alfa Demmellash. Yes, you did.

The President. Good. When your name is Barack Obama, you're sensitive to these things. [*Laughter*] So Alfa is with Rising Tide Capital, an organization that helps struggling mom-and-pop entrepreneurs get loans, run their businesses, and improve their profit margins. Seventy percent of their clients are single moms; all of them rely on their businesses to support their families. And so far Rising Tide has helped 250 businessowners in the State of New Jersey. So imagine if they could help 500 or 1,000 or more all across America.

If we empower organizations like these, think about the number of young people like Vanessa and Richard whose lives we can change, the number of families whose livelihoods we can boost, the number of struggling communities we can bring back to life.

In the end, that's what this effort is about. It's not about the old partisan lines in the sand. We know there's nothing Democratic or Republican about just doing what works. So we want to cast aside worn ideological debates and focus on what really helps people in their daily lives. That's what each and every one of you are doing all across America. For that, I honor you, I thank you, and I look forward to working with you in the days and months and years ahead to address the urgent challenges of our time.

So thank you very much, everybody. Good luck.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:21 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Geoffrey Canada, president and chief executive officer, Harlem Children's Zone; Robert Chambers, president and cofounder, Bonnie CLAC; Pat Christen, president and chief executive officer, and Richard Ross, tester, Hope Lab; Vanessa Nunez, participant, Genesys Works; former Mayor Steve Goldsmith of Indianapolis, IN; Mayor Dave Cieslewicz of Madison, WI; Wendy Kopp, founder and chief executive officer, Teach for America; Jim McCorkell, founder and chief executive officer, Admission Possible; and Alfa Demmellash, founder and chief executive officer, Rising Tide Capital.

Statement on Senator-Elect Al Franken's Certification as Winner of the 2008 Minnesota Senatorial Race
June 30, 2009

I look forward to working with Senator-elect Franken to build a new foundation for growth and prosperity by lowering health care costs and investing in the kind of clean energy jobs and industries that will help America lead in the 21st century.

Statement on a Meeting on the 1976 Influenza Outbreak
June 30, 2009

Today I joined Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, Education Secretary Arne Duncan, Homeland Security Adviser John Brennan, and other senior advisers to meet with a select group of individuals who could speak knowledgeably about the lessons learned from the 1976 influenza so that we can further prepare this Nation for the possibility of a more severe outbreak of H1N1 flu.

Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report Concerning a Review of the Performance of Bolivia and Ecuador as Set Forth in the Andean Trade Preference Act
June 30, 2009

Dear _____:

Pursuant to section 208(b) of the Andean Trade Preference Act, as amended (ATPA) (19 U.S.C. 3206(b)), I am pleased to transmit the attached report. The report sets out my determinations based on a review of the performance of Bolivia and Ecuador with respect to the ATPA's eligibility criteria and a summary of the developments and concerns that exist in four key areas reflecting the criteria set forth in the ATPA.

Sincerely,

BARACK OBAMA

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Max S. Baucus, chairman, and Charles E. Grassley, ranking member, Senate Committee on Finance; and Charles B. Rangel, chairman, and David L. Camp, ranking member, House Committee on Ways and Means.

Appendix A—Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this book.

January 20

In the afternoon, in Statuary Hall at the U.S. Capitol, the President and Mrs. Obama participated in the Inaugural luncheon. Later, they attended the Inaugural parade.

In the evening, at the Washington Convention Center, the President and Mrs. Obama attended and made remarks at the Neighborhood Ball. During the ball, he participated in an interview with Robin Roberts of ABC News. They then attended and made remarks at the Obama Home State Ball.

Later in the evening, at the National Building Museum, the President and Mrs. Obama attended and made remarks at the Commander-in-Chief Ball. Then, at the Hilton Washington Hotel Center, they attended and made remarks at the Youth Ball. Later, at the Washington Convention Center, they attended and made remarks at the Biden Home State Ball followed by the Mid Atlantic Region Ball.

January 21

In the morning, at the Washington Convention Center, the President and Mrs. Bush attended and made remarks at the West/Southwestern Regional Ball followed by the Midwestern Regional Ball. Later, at the DC Armory, they attended and made remarks at the Southern Regional Ball. Then, at Union Station, they attended and made remarks at the Eastern Regional Ball.

Later in the morning, the President met with White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel. Then, at the National Cathedral, he and Mrs. Obama attended a national prayer service with Vice President Joe Biden and his wife Jill and former President William J. Clinton and Secretary of State-designate Hillary Rodham Clinton. Later, he had separate conversations with King Abdullah II of Jordan, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert of Israel, President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, and President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority.

In the afternoon, the President had an intelligence briefing and met with his economic advisers. Later, in the Situation Room, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, General Raymond T. Odierno, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq, and General David H. Petraeus, USA, commander, U.S. Central Command, to discuss the military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In the evening, in the Map Room, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court John G. Roberts, Jr., readministered the oath of office to the President. Later, at the DC Armory, he and Mrs. Obama attended and made remarks at the Obama for America Staff Ball.

January 22

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had an economic briefing. He then met with senior White House staff.

Later in the morning, the President met with retired military officers.

In the afternoon, at the State Department, the President and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, National Security Adviser James L. Jones, Jr., and Deputy National Security Adviser Tom Donilon.

Later in the afternoon, the President toured the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House.

January 23

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by a National Security Council meeting. Later, he had an economic briefing. Then, in the Cabinet Room, he met with bipartisan congressional leaders.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Sen. Kirsten

Gillibrand of New York to congratulate her on her recent congressional appointment.

January 24

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then had an economic briefing.

During the day, the President met with his economic advisers.

January 26

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then had an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and the U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East George J. Mitchell. Then, in the Map Room, he participated in an interview with Hisham Melhem of Al Arabiya Television.

During the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia, President Nicolas Sarkozy of France, Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, and President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil.

In the evening, the President participated in a swearing-in ceremony for Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner.

January 27

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then had an economic briefing in which he met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner and National Economic Council Director Lawrence H. Summers.

In the afternoon, at the U.S. Capitol, the President met with the House Republican Conference. He then met with the Senate Republican Conference. Later, he had separate telephone conversations with Prime Minister Kevin M. Rudd of Australia and President Alvaro Uribe Velez of Colombia.

January 28

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, in the Oval Office, he had an economic briefing in which he met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner, National Economic Council Director Lawrence H. Summers, and Chairman of the President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board Paul A. Volcker. Later, he had a meeting with his senior advisers.

Later in the morning, in the Roosevelt Room, the President met with business leaders and chief executive officers.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Arlington, VA, where, at the Pentagon, he, Vice President Joe Biden, and National Security Adviser James L. Jones, Jr., met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He then met with U.S. military personnel.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Kgalema Motlanthe of South Africa.

In the evening, the President had separate telephone conversations with Gov. Mickey D. Beebe of Arkansas and Gov. Steven L. Beshear of Kentucky to discuss the severe winter storm affecting both States. He then hosted a dinner party for Republican congressional leaders. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Taro Aso of Japan.

The White House announced that the President will travel to Canada on February 19.

The President announced that he has named Daniel J. Meltzer as Principal Deputy White House Counsel and Deputy Assistant to the President.

The President announced that he has named Mary DeRosa as Deputy Counsel to the President for National Security Affairs and Legal Advisor to the National Security Council.

The President announced that he has named Neal S. Wolin as Deputy Counsel to the President for Economic Policy and Deputy Assistant to the President.

The President announced that he has named Norman L. Eisen as Special Counsel to the President for Ethics and Government Reform.

The President announced that he has named Kendall C. Burman as Associate Counsel to the President.

The President announced that he has named Susan Davies as Associate Counsel to the President.

The President announced that he has named Karen Dunn as Associate Counsel to the President.

The President announced that he has named Danielle Gray as Associate Counsel to the President.

The President announced that he has named Michael Gottlieb as Associate Counsel to the President.

The President announced that he has named Roberto J. Gonzalez as Associate Counsel to the President.

The President announced that he has named Virginia Canter as Associate Counsel to the President.

The President announced that he has named Caroline Krass as Associate Counsel to the President for National Security Affairs.

The President announced that he has named Jonathan Kravis as Associate Counsel to the President.

The President announced that he has named Trevor Morrison as Associate Counsel to the President for National Security Affairs.

The President announced that he has named Alison J. Nathan as Associate Counsel to the President.

The President announced that he has named Kate Shaw as Associate Counsel to the President.

The President announced that he has named Susan S. Sher as Associate Counsel to the President and Counsel to the First Lady.

The President announced that he has named Christian A. Weideman as Associate Counsel to the President.

The President announced that he has named Ian Bassin as Deputy Associate Counsel to the President.

The President announced that he has named Rashad Hussain as Deputy Associate Counsel to the President.

The President announced that he has named Blake Roberts as Deputy Associate Counsel to the President.

The President announced that he has named Jason G. Green as Deputy Associate Counsel to the President.

The President announced that he has named Diana Farrell as Deputy Director of the National Economic Council.

The President announced that he has named Jason Furman as Deputy Director of the National Economic Council.

The President announced that he has named David P. Agnew as Deputy Director for the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs.

The President announced that he has named Shaun McGrath as Deputy Director for the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs.

The President declared an emergency in Arkansas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm beginning on January 26 and continuing.

The President declared an emergency in Kentucky and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local response efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm beginning on January 27 and continuing.

January 29

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Bethesda, MD, where they visited the Sidwell Friends School. Later, in the State Dining Room, they participated in a reception to celebrate the signing of S. 181, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009.

Later in the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Vice President Joe Biden and Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Vice President Joe Biden and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

January 30

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, he had a telephone

conversation with President Hu Jintao of China.

In the afternoon, in the Situation Room, the President met with senior noncommissioned officers.

During the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada, King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia, Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom, and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the United Nations. He also met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with Gov. Jeremiah W. "Jay" Nixon of Missouri to discuss the winter storm affecting the State.

The President declared a major disaster in Washington and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm, landslides, mudslides, and flooding from January 6–16.

The President declared an emergency in Missouri and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm beginning on January 26 and continuing.

January 31

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the evening, at the Capital Hilton Hotel, the President and Mrs. Obama attended the Alfalfa Club dinner.

February 1

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama hosted a National Football League's Super Bowl party for Members of Congress.

February 2

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, he had separate telephone conversations with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and President Jalal Talabani of Iraq.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he and Vice President Biden met with congressional leadership to discuss financial legislation.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ronald C. Sims to be Deputy Secretary at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

February 3

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama visited the Capital City Public Charter School, where they met with students and read to one of the classes. Later, in the Oval Office, he participated in separate interviews with Charles Gibson of ABC News, Brian Williams of NBC News, Katie Couric of CBS News, Anderson Cooper of Cable News Network, and Chris Wallace of FOX News.

During the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with Gov. Charles J. Crist, Jr., of Florida, Gov. Arnold A. Schwarzenegger of California, and Gov. M. Jodi Rell of Connecticut to discuss his economic recovery plan and financial legislation.

The President announced his intention to nominate L. Tammy Duckworth to be Assistant Secretary of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

February 4

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an economic briefing followed by an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

Later in the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George J. Mitchell.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had lunch with Vice President Joe Biden. Later, at the Newseum, he attended the Senate Democratic retreat.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of the Interior Kenneth L. Salazar.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama attended the House Democratic Caucus leadership cocktail reception.

February 5

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, White House Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs informed the President that Supreme Court Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg had surgery for pancreatic cancer. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner. Then, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

In the evening, the President traveled to Williamsburg, VA. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

The President declared a major disaster in Kentucky and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm and flooding beginning on January 26 and continuing.

February 6

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, in the East Room, he and Chairman of the President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board Paul A. Volcker introduced the members of the President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board.

In the afternoon, the President met with family members of victims of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the USS *Cole* terrorist attack.

In the evening, at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Sasha and Malia attended a performance by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

The President announced that he has named Jodi Archambault Gillette as Deputy Associate Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs.

The President announced that he has named Nicholas Rathod as Deputy Associate Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs.

The President announced that he has named Michael Blake as Deputy Associate Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs.

The President declared a major disaster in Arkansas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm beginning on January 26 and continuing.

February 7

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Sasha and Malia traveled to Camp David, MD.

February 8

In the afternoon, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Sasha and Malia returned to Washington, DC.

February 9

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. He then met with senior White House staff. Later, he traveled to South Bend, IN.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Elkhart, IN.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Kevin M. Rudd of Australia to offer his condolences for the loss of life due to the wildfires in Victoria and offered U.S. assistance to the Australian Government and citizens affected by the fires.

February 10

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Later, he traveled to Fort Myers, FL.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. Later, in the State Dining

Room, he met with members of the Democratic Blue Dog Coalition.

February 11

In the morning, the President had separate telephone conversations Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy and President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan. Then, in the Oval Office, he had an intelligence briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers. Later, he traveled to Springfield, VA.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. Later, he had a telephone conversation with President Shimon Peres of Israel. Then, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

During the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with Gov. Brad Henry and Sens. James M. Inhofe and Thomas A. Coburn of Oklahoma to discuss the February 10 tornadoes that struck the State and offered his condolences and support to the victims of the tornadoes. He also met with Rep. John D. Dingell, Jr., to congratulate him and thank him for his service as the longest serving Member of the House of Representatives.

February 12

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to East Peoria, IL, where he visited a Caterpillar, Inc., plant. Later, he traveled to Springfield, IL, arriving in the evening.

Later in the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

February 13

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had lunch with Vice President Joe Biden. He then had a telephone conversation with King Juan Carlos I of Spain to discuss Spain-U.S. relations. Later, he, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Sasha and Malia traveled to their home in Chicago, IL.

February 14

In the morning, at the Obama home in Chicago, IL, the President had an intelligence briefing.

February 15

The President declared a major disaster in Oklahoma and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and tornadoes on February 10 and 11.

February 16

In the morning, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Sasha and Malia returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the afternoon.

Later in the afternoon, the President had separate telephone conversations with President Abdullah Gul and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey.

February 17

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Denver, CO, arriving in the afternoon, where he was joined by Vice President Joe Biden.

Later in the afternoon, at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, the President and Vice President Biden toured the museum's solar panel installation. Later, he traveled to Phoenix, AZ.

The White House announced that the President will meet with Prime Minister Taro Aso of Japan at the White House on February 24.

The President declared a major disaster in Oklahoma and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the areas struck by severe winter storms from January 26–28.

The President declared a major disaster in Missouri and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the areas struck by severe winter storms from January 26–28.

The President declared a major disaster in Tennessee and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the areas struck by winter storms and flooding from January 27–31.

February 18

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. He then traveled to Mesa, AZ. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the afternoon.

February 19

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Ottawa, Canada, where, in the Canada Reception Centre at Ottawa International Airport, he met with Governor General Michaelle Jean of Canada. He then traveled to Parliament Hill, where, in the Rotunda, he was greeted by Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada and Parliament officials.

Later in the morning, in the Rotunda, the President signed guest books.

In the afternoon, in the Prime Minister's office, the President met with Prime Minister Harper. Then, in the Senate Dining Room, he had a working lunch with Prime Minister Harper. Later, he traveled to By Ward Market.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to Ottawa International Airport, where, in the Canada Reception Centre, he met with Liberal Party of Canada leader Michael Ignatieff. Later, he met with U.S. Embassy staff and their families. He then returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the evening.

The President announced that he has appointed Adolfo Carrion as White House Director of Urban Affairs.

The President announced that he has appointed Derek Douglas as Special Assistant to the President for Urban Affairs.

February 20

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had lunch with Vice President Joe Biden.

The President announced that he has appointed Mary Wakefield as Administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration.

February 21

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

During the day, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughter Malia traveled to Kensington, MD. Later, they returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom to the White House on March 3.

February 22

In the evening, in the State Dining Room, the President and Mrs. Obama attended the 2009 National Governors Association dinner followed by entertainment in the East Room.

February 23

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing.

In the evening, the President met with actor and human rights activist George Clooney, United Nations Messenger of Peace, to discuss his recent visit to Chad, Africa.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kathleen A. Merrigan to be Deputy Secretary of the Department of Agriculture.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jonathan Z. Cannon to be Deputy Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The President announced his intention to nominate Seth D. Harris to be Deputy Secretary of the Department of Labor.

The President announced his intention to nominate John Morton to be Assistant Secretary for Immigration and Customs Enforcement at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ashton Carter to be Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate April Boyd to be Assistant Secretary for Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to nominate Thomas L. Strickland to be Assistant

Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks at the Department of the Interior.

The President announced that he has appointed Earl E. Devaney as Chair of the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board.

February 24

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

February 25

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President and Vice President Joe Biden met with Democratic congressional leadership. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner and the chairmen and ranking members of the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs and the House Committee on Financial Services. He then participated in a National Security Council meeting.

In the evening, in the East Room, the President and Mrs. Obama hosted the "Stevie Wonder in Performance at the White House: The Library of Congress Gershwin Prize" event, where he presented Stevie Wonder with the Gershwin Prize for Popular Song.

February 26

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had lunch with Vice President Joe Biden. Later, in the State Dining Room, he met with the Congressional Black Caucus. Then, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner followed by a meeting with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Later in the afternoon, in the Blue Room, the President met with the National Basketball Association's Chicago Bulls.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Michel Sleiman of Lebanon. He also met with Ambassador Stephen W. Bosworth, Special Representative for North Korea Policy.

In the evening, the President met with bipartisan congressional leadership to discuss his plan to draw down U.S. military forces in Iraq.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Brian Cowen of Ireland to the White House on March 17.

The White House announced that the President will meet with Prime Minister Kevin M. Rudd of Australia at the White House on March 24.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jim Miller to be Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Policy at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lt. Gen. Wallace "Chip" Gregson, Jr., USMC (Ret.), to be Assistant Secretary for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs at the Department of Defense.

The President announced that he has appointed Jeffrey S. Crowley as the Director of Office of National AIDS Policy.

February 27

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an economic briefing. He then traveled to Camp Lejeune, NC. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had an intelligence briefing followed by a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq to discuss his plan to draw down U.S. military forces in Iraq and to reach an agreement with Prime Minister Maliki to receive the next U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Christopher R. Hill.

Later in the morning, upon arrival at Camp Lejeune, the President had a telephone conversation with former President George W. Bush to brief him on his plan to draw down U.S. military forces in Iraq.

In the afternoon, the President met with wounded marines and their families. He then participated in separate interviews with PBS's "The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer." Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

In the evening, at the Verizon Center, the President attended a Washington Wizards-Chicago Bulls basketball game.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jon Leibowitz to be Chairman of the Federal Trade Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Roy W. Kienitz to be Under Secretary for Policy at the Department of Transportation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Charles P. Rose to be General Counsel at the Department of Education.

February 28

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

March 2

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K.Shinseki.

The President declared a major disaster in Illinois and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the areas struck by severe winter storms from January 26–28.

The President declared a major disaster in Oregon and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the areas struck by severe winter storms from December 20–26, 2008.

The President declared a major disaster in Washington and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the areas struck by severe winter storms from December 12, 2008 to January 5, 2009.

March 3

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Old Family Dining Room, the President had a working lunch with Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with a delegation from the Boy Scouts of America to receive their annual report. Then, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

The President announced his intention to nominate M. John Berry to be Director of the Office of Personnel Management.

The President announced his intention to nominate Julius Genachowski to be Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission.

March 4

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, they had an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom.

The President announced his intention to nominate W. Craig Fugate to be Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The President announced his intention to nominate Brian V. Kennedy to be Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs at the Department of Labor.

The President announced his intention to nominate Dana G. Gresham to be Assistant Secretary for Governmental Affairs at the Department of Transportation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Peter A. Kovar to be Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The President announced his intention to nominate Sherburne "Shere" Abbott to be Associate Director of Environment at the Office of Science and Technology Policy.

The President declared a major disaster in New York and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area

struck by a severe winter storm from December 11–31, 2008.

March 5

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, he met with actor and activist Brad Pitt to discuss ongoing rebuilding efforts in New Orleans, LA.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner.

The White House announced that the President and Mrs. Obama will visit the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and the Czech Republic from March 31 to April 5.

The President announced that he has named Vivek Kundra as Federal Chief Information Officer at the White House.

The President declared a major disaster in Indiana and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm from January 26–28.

March 6

In the morning, the President traveled to Columbus, OH. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC. While en route aboard Air Force One, he participated in an interview with Peter Baker, Helene Cooper, Sheryl Gay Stolberg, and Jeff Zeleny of the New York Times.

Later in the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Bethesda, MD, where they visited the Sidwell Friends School. Later, they returned to Washington, DC.

The White House announced that the President will meet with President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil at the White House on March 14.

The President announced his intention to nominate Esther Brimmer to be Assistant Secretary for International Organizations at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Philip H. Gordon to be Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Melanne Verveer to be Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues at the Department of State.

March 7

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with Adm. Michael G. Mullen, USN, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, to discuss the situation in Mexico. Then, in the Oval Office, he had an intelligence briefing. Later, he, Mrs. Obama traveled to Camp David, MD, where they were joined by their daughters Sasha and Malia.

March 8

In the afternoon, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Sasha and Malia returned to Washington, DC.

In the evening, at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the President and Mrs. Obama attended an event celebrating Sen. Edward M. Kennedy's birthday.

The President announced his intention to nominate David S. Cohen to be Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing at the Department of the Treasury.

The President announced his intention to nominate Alan B. Krueger to be Assistant Secretary for Economic Policy at the Department of the Treasury.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kim N. Wallace to be Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs at the Department of the Treasury.

March 9

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had an economic briefing with Federal Reserve Chairman Ben S. Bernanke, Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner, National Economic Council Director Lawrence H. Summers, and Council of Economic Advisers Chair Christina D. Romer. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Intel Science Talent Search finalists.

March 10

In the morning, at the Westin Washington, D.C. City Center, the President made remarks to the Council of Chief State School Officers. Later, in the Oval Office, he had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had an economic briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers. Later, in the State Dining Room, he met with members of the New Democrat Coalition.

March 11

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President and Vice President Joe Biden met with Democratic members of the Senate Budget Committee. Later, in the State Dining Room, they met with Democratic members of the House Budget Committee.

The President announced his intention to nominate R. Gil Kerlikowske to be Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Christopher R. Hill to be Ambassador to Iraq.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lt. Gen. Karl W. Eikenberry, USA, to be Ambassador to Afghanistan.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ivo Daalder to be U.S. Permanent Representative on the Council of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The President announced his intention to nominate Alexander Vershbow to be Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs.

The President announced his intention to nominate Richard R. Verma to be Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs at the State Department.

March 12

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an economic briefing followed by an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Yang Jiechi of China. Later, also in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

The President announced his intention to nominate Demetrios J. Marantis to be Deputy U.S. Trade Representative.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kristina M. Johnson to be Under Secretary of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Gina McCarthy to be Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation at the Environmental Protection Agency.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ronald H. Weich to be Assistant Attorney General of the Office of Legislative Affairs at the Department of Justice.

March 13

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an economic briefing followed by an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, he had separate telephone conversations with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of the Philippines and President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had lunch with Vice President Joe Biden.

During the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia and President Cristina Fernandez De Kirchner of Argentina.

The President announced his intention to nominate Thomas E. Perez to be Assistant Attorney General of the Civil Rights Division at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to nominate Linda A. Puchala to be a member of the National Mediation Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate James W. Miller to be Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agriculture Service at the Department of Agriculture.

The President announced his intention to nominate Dallas P. Tonsager to be Under Secretary for Rural Development at the Department of Agriculture.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ines R. Triay to be Assistant Secretary for Environmental Management at the Department of Energy.

The President announced that he has appointed Ambassador Jeffrey Davidow as White House Adviser for the Summit of the Americas.

March 14

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced that he has appointed Margaret "Peggy" Hamburg as Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration.

The President announced that he has appointed Joshua M. Sharfstein as Principal Deputy Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration.

March 15

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had an economic meeting with his advisers.

March 16

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, he and Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner met with small-business owners and community leaders.

In the afternoon, the President met with veterans and veterans' service organizations.

March 17

In the morning, in the Vice President's ceremonial office inthe Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, the President met with Senate Budget Committee Chairman Kent Conrad and House Committee on the Budget Chairman John M. Spratt, Jr. Later, in the Oval Office, he had an economic briefing. Then, in the National Security Adviser's office, he met with First Minister Peter Robinson and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness of Northern Ireland.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President met with Francis Cardinal George, Archbishop of Chicago and president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The President announced his intention to nominate Daniel M. Rooney to be Ambassador to Ireland.

The President announced his intention to nominate Judge David F. Hamilton to the U.S. Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals.

The President announced his intention to nominate Rose E. Gottemoeller to be Assistant Secretary of State for Verification and Compliance.

March 18

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an economic briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers. He then had a telephone conversation with President-elect Carlos Mauricio Funes Cartagena of El Salvador to congratulate him on his election victory and discuss El Salvador-U.S. relations.

Later, in the State Dining Room, he met with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus. He then had a telephone conversation with House Committee on Financial Services Chairman Barney Frank.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Costa Mesa, CA. Later, he traveled to Los Angeles, CA, arriving in the evening.

The President announced his intention to nominate Susan F. Burk to be Special Representative to the President, with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to nominate Raphael Bostic to be Assistant

Secretary for Policy Development and Research at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michelle J. DePass to be Assistant Administrator for International Affairs at the Environmental Protection Agency.

The President announced his intention to nominate Cynthia J. Giles to be Assistant Administrator for Enforcement and Compliance Assurance at the Environmental Protection Agency.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael L. Connor to be Director of the Bureau of Reclamation at the Department of the Interior.

The President announced his intention to nominate Scott Blake Harris to be General Counsel of the Department of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Joseph C. Szabo to be Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration at the Department of Transportation.

March 19

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Pomona, CA, where he toured Southern California Edison's Electric Vehicle Technical Center. He then participated in a radio interview with Ed Schultz of "The Ed Schultz Radio Show."

Later in the morning, the President met with students from the Village Academy High School at Indian Hill.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Los Angeles, CA. He then traveled to Burbank, CA. Later, he returned to Washington, DC, arriving the following morning.

The President announced his intention to nominate Suedeen G. Kelly to be a Commissioner of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Elizabeth L. King to be Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate T. Michael Kerr to be Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management at the Department of Labor.

The President announced his intention to nominate Gabriella C. Gomez to be Assistant Secretary for Legislation and Congressional Affairs at the Department of Education.

The President announced his intention to nominate Joe Leonard, Jr., to be Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights at the Department of Agriculture.

The President announced his intention to nominate Cameron F. Kerry to be General Counsel at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert S. Rivkin to be General Counsel at the Department of Transportation.

The President announced his intention to nominate M. Patricia Smith to be Solicitor of the Department of Labor.

The President announced that he has designated Jon Wellinghoff as Chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

March 20

Later in the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Later, in the State Dining Room, he and Mrs. Obama attended the National Newspaper Publishers Association reception.

During the day, the President participated in an interview with Steve Kroft of CBS's "60 Minutes" program for later broadcast.

The President announced his intention to nominate Steven E. Koonin to be Under Secretary for Science at the Department of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate David B. Sandalow to be Assistant Secretary for Policy and International Affairs at the Department of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Johnnie Carson to be Assistant Secretary for African Affairs at the State Department.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kathleen Martinez to be Assistant Secretary for Disability Employment Policy at the Department of Labor.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jonathan S. Adelstein to be

Administrator for the Rural Utilities Service at the Department of Agriculture.

The President announced his intention to nominate Timothy W. Manning to be Deputy Administrator for National Preparedness of the Federal Emergency Management Agency at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to nominate Priscilla E. Guthrie to be Chief Information Officer at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

March 21

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he and Mrs. Obama and their daughters Sasha and Malia traveled to Camp David, MD.

March 22

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

March 23

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Roosevelt Room, they had an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom.

The President announced his intention to nominate David H. Stevens to be Assistant Secretary for Housing and Federal Housing Commissioner at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The President announced his intention to nominate Harold Hongju Koh to be Legal Adviser of the State Department.

The President announced his intention to nominate Yvette Roubideaux to be Director of the Indian Health Service at the Department of Health and Human Services.

The President announced his intention to nominate Neal S. Wolin to be Deputy Secretary of the Treasury.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lael Brainard to be Under Secretary for International Affairs at the Department of the Treasury.

The President announced that he has designated Emily C. Hewitt as Chief Judge of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims.

March 24

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, in the Palm Room, he met with Children's Miracle Network champions and their families.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an economic briefing. They then had lunch. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Secretary General Jakob Gijsbert "Jaap" de Hoop Scheffer of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to the White House on March 25.

The President announced his intention to nominate Marisa J. Demeo and Florence Y. Pan to be Associate Judges in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Luis C. de Baca to be Ambassador-at-Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons at the State Department.

The President declared a major disaster in North Dakota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding beginning on March 13 and continuing.

March 25

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an economic briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, at the U.S. Capitol, the President met with the Senate Democratic Caucus. He then met with Sens. Byron L. Dorgan and Kent Conrad and Rep. Earl R. Pomeroy III of North Dakota and Sen. Amy Klobuchar and Rep. Collin C. Peterson of Minnesota to discuss the recent flooding in North Dakota and Minnesota. Later, he traveled to Arlington, VA, where he participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington National Cemetery to commemorate National Medal of Honor Day.

Later in the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Howard K. Koh to be Assistant Secretary for Health at the Department of Health and Human Services.

The President announced his intention to nominate Phyllis C. Borzi to be Assistant Secretary for Employee Benefits Security at the Department of Labor.

The President announced his intention to nominate Helen R. Kanovsky to be General Counsel of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The President announced his intention to nominate Rhea S. Suh to be Assistant Secretary for Policy Management and Budget at the Department of the Interior.

The President announced his intention to nominate Hilary C. Tompkins to be Solicitor of the Department of the Interior.

March 26

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had an economic briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers.

During the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with several Members of Congress to brief them on the administration's Afghanistan policy review. He also had separate telephone conversations with President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan and President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ray Mabus to be Secretary of the Navy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Donald Michael Remy to be General Counsel of the Army.

The President announced his intention to nominate J. Randolph Babbitt to be Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jose D. Riojas to be Assistant Secretary for Operations, Security and Preparedness at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The President announced his intention to nominate John D. Trasvina to be Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lawrence E. Strickling to be Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to nominate Catherine R. Zoi to be Assistant Secretary for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy at the Department of Energy.

The President declared an emergency in Minnesota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding beginning on March 16 and continuing.

March 27

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the State Dining Room, the President met with chief executive officers of several banks to discuss the administration's economic recovery plan.

In the evening, the President traveled to Camp David, MD.

March 28

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

The President announced his intention to nominate Helen Elizabeth Garrett to be Assistant Secretary for Tax Policy at the Department of the Treasury.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael S. Barr to be Assistant Secretary for Financial Institutions at the Department of the Treasury.

The President announced his intention to nominate George W. Madison to be General Counsel of the Department of the Treasury.

March 29

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

March 30

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates. Later, at the U.S. Capitol, he met with the House Democratic Caucus.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada to discuss the upcoming Group of Twenty (G–20) summit and the global financial markets situation.

March 31

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to London, United Kingdom, arriving in the evening. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom. He also had an intelligence briefing.

Later in the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Winfield House, the U.S. Ambassador's residence. They then traveled to the American School, where they met with U.S. Embassy staff. Later, they returned to Winfield House.

The President announced his intention to nominate Anne Castle to be Assistant Secretary for Water and Science at the Department of the Interior.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mathy V. Stanislaus to be Assistant Administrator for the Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response at the Environmental Protection Agency.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jo-Ellen Darcy to be Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works.

The President announced his intention to nominate John U. Sepulveda to be Assistant Secretary for Human Resources at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The President announced his intention to nominate Roger W. Baker to be Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The President announced his intention to nominate William A. Gunn to be General Counsel of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

April 1

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to 10 Downing Street, the Prime Minister's residence. Later, they returned to Winfield House.

In the afternoon, the President met with Conservative Party Leader and Opposition Leader David Cameron. Later, he and Mrs. Obama traveled to Buckingham Palace, where they met with Queen Elizabeth II.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama attended the Group of Twenty (G–20) leaders reception. Later, they returned to Winfield House, where he participated in a working dinner with G–20 leaders.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel.

The President announced his intention to nominate Martha J. Kanter to be Under Secretary of Education.

The President announced his intention to nominate Krysta Harden to be Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations at the Department of Agriculture.

The President announced his intention to nominate Stephen A. Owens to be Assistant Administrator for the Office of Prevention, Pesticides, and Toxic Substances at the Environmental Protection Agency.

April 2

In the morning, the President traveled to the ExCeL centre, where he participated in a breakfast with G–20 leaders. Later, he attended the opening plenary session of the G–20 summit.

In the afternoon, the President participated in a lunch with G–20 leaders. Later, he attended the afternoon plenary session of the G–20 summit. He then met with King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia.

Later in the afternoon, the President met with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India.

In the evening, the President returned to Winfield House.

The President announced his intention to nominate Gerard E. Lynch to be a judge on

the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

The President announced his intention to nominate Andre Davis to be a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert M. Groves to be Director of the Bureau of the Census at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to nominate Victor M. Mendez to be Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration at the Department of Transportation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Peter H. Appel to be Administrator of the Research and Innovative Technology Administration at the Department of Transportation.

The President announced his intention to nominate John Q. Easton to be Director of the Institute of Education Sciences at the Department of Education.

April 3

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Strasbourg, France. Upon arrival, they traveled to the Palais Rohan.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to the Rhenus Sport Arena. Later, they traveled to Baden-Baden, Germany. Upon arrival, he and Mrs. Obama traveled to the Rathaus, where he met with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to the Kurhaus, where they attended a North Atlantic Treaty Organization concert. Later, he participated in a working dinner with North Atlantic Treaty Organization leaders. They then returned to Strasbourg, France.

The President announced his intention to nominate Peter S. Silva to be Assistant Administrator for Water Programs at the Environmental Protection Agency.

The President announced his intention to nominate Martha N. Johnson to be Adminstrator of the General Services Administration.

April 4

In the morning, the President traveled to Kehl, Germany. Later, he and North Atlantic Treaty Organization leaders traveled to Strasbourg, France, where they were met by President Nicolas Sarkozy of France. They then attended a tribute to North Atlantic Treaty Organization military personnel.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to the Palais de la Musique et des Congres, where he met with Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen of Denmark and President Abdullah Gul of Turkey to discuss the appointment of the next Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. He then participated in the North Atlantic Council summit meeting.

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Prague, Czech Republic, arriving in the evening.

Later in the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to the Hilton Prague hotel, where they met with U.S. Embassy staff.

April 5

In the morning, the President was briefed on the North Korean missile launch. He then had separate telephone conversations with Gen. James E. Cartwright, USMC, Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates to discuss the missile launch. He also met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton to discuss the missile launch.

Later in the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Prague Castle. Later, they traveled to Hradcany Square. He then traveled to the Prague Congress Center, where he met with President Jose Manuel Durao Barroso of the European Commission.

In the afternoon, the President attended a reception with European Union leaders. He then participated in the European Union-U.S. summit working lunch.

In the evening, the President traveled to Ankara, Turkey. Upon arrival, he traveled to the Sheraton Ankara hotel.

April 6

In the morning, the President traveled to the Anitkabir, where he participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at the tomb of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to the parliament building.

In the evening, the President traveled to Istanbul, Turkey. Upon arrival, he traveled to Dolmabahce Palace, where he met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Eduard Nalbandian of Armenia, Chief of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs Micheline Calmy-Rey of Switzerland, and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Babacan of Turkey to discuss the normalization of relations between Turkey and Armenia. Later, he traveled to the Conrad Istanbul hotel.

The President announced that he has appointed the following individuals as members of the President's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships:

Anju Bhargava;
Charles Blake;
Peg Chemberlin;
Nathan Diament;
Harry Knox;
Dalia Mogahed;
Anthony Picarello;
Nancy Ratzan; and
Sharon Watkins.

April 7

In the morning, the President met Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople. He then met with Chairman of the Religious Council of the Armenian Church in Turkey Archbishop Aram Atesyan, Chief Rabbi of Istanbul Isak Haleva, Grand Mufti of Istanbul Mustafa Cagrici, and Syriac Orthodox Archbishop Yusuf Cetin of Istanbul and Ankara. Later, he traveled to the Hagia Sophia, where he was joined by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey. They then toured the museum.

Later in the morning, the President and Prime Minister Erdogan toured the Blue Mosque.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to the Tophane Cultural Center. Later, he traveled to Baghdad, Iraq. He then traveled to Camp Victory, where he met with Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy to offer his condolences for the loss of life due to the April 6 earthquake in L'Aquila, Italy, and offered U.S. assistance to the Italian Government and the victims of the earthquake. He also had a telephone conversation with President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan.

In the evening, the President met with U.S. military personnel and awarded medals to several soldiers. Later, he met with President Jalal Talabani of Iraq.

Later in the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving the following morning. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had a telephone conversation with head coach Roy Williams of the University of North Carolina men's basketball team to congratulate him on the team's April 6 NCAA championship.

April 8

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with head coach Geno Auriemma of the University of Connecticut women's basketball team to congratulate him on the team's April 7 NCAA championship.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mary L. Smith to be Assistant Attorney General of the Tax Division at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert R. Beers to be Under Secretary for National Protection and Programs at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to nominate Peter M. Rogoff to be Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration at the Department of Transportation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jane Oates to be Assistant Secretary for Employment and Training Administration at the Department of Labor.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jeffrey D. Feltman to be Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Charles A. Hurley to be Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety

Administration at the Department of Transportation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert O. Work to be Under Secretary of the Department of the Navy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Charles A. Blanchard to be General Counsel of the Department of the Air Force.

April 9

In the morning, the President met with leaders of several veterans' service organizations and military service organizations.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had lunch with Vice President Joe Biden. Later, in the East Room, he and Mrs. Obama attended and made remarks at a memorial service for White House staff member Smile "Smiley" Saint-Aubin.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had an economic briefing followed by a meeting with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Patrick Manning of Trinidad and Tobago to discuss the upcoming Summit of the Americas.

In the evening, in the Old Family Dining Room, the President hosted a Seder to celebrate the beginning of Passover.

The President declared a major disaster in Minnesota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding beginning on March 16 and continuing.

April 10

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had an economic briefing.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President John Evans Atta Mills of Ghana. He also had a telephone conversation with President Alan Garcia Perez of Peru.

The President announced his intention to nominate Larry J. EchoHawk to be Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior.

The President announced his intention to nominate Sandra B. Henriquez to be Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The President announced his intention to nominate A. Thomas McLellan to be Deputy Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

The President announced his intention to nominate John D. Porcari to be Deputy Secretary of the Department of Transportation.

April 12

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Andrea Phillips, wife of Captain Richard Phillips of the MV *Maersk Alabama* who was captured by pirates off the coast of Somalia on April 8, to discuss her husband's rescue by U.S. Navy SEALs.

April 13

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

April 14

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

The President announced his intention to nominate Daniel B. Poneman to be Deputy Secretary of the Department of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Fred P. Hochberg to be President and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Export-Import Bank of the United States.

The President announced his intention to nominate Francisco J. Sanchez to be Under Secretary for International Trade at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced his intention to nominate Miriam E. Sapiro to be Deputy U.S. Trade Representative.

The President announced his intention to nominate Judith A. McHale to be Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Philip J. Crowley to be Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Bonnie D. Jenkins to be Coordinator for Threat Reduction Programs at the Department of State, with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to nominate Thomasina Rogers to be Chairman of the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lorelei Boylan to be Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division at the Department of Labor.

The President announced his intention to nominate David F. Heyman to be Assistant Secretary for Policy at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to nominate Andrew C. Weber to be Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Nuclear and Chemical and Biological Defense Programs.

The President announced his intention to nominate Stephen W. Preston to be General Counsel of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The President announced his intention to nominate Laurie I. Mikva to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation.

April 15

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, in Room 350 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, he met with working families.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had lunch with Vice President Joe Biden. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with U.S. Trade Representative Ronald Kirk.

The White House announced that the President will meet with King Abdullah II of Jordan at the White House on April 21.

April 16

In the morning, the President traveled to Mexico City, Mexico, arriving in the afternoon. While en route aboard Air Force One, he had an intelligence briefing.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to la Residencia Oficial de Los Pinos. Later, he traveled to the Presidente InterContinental Mexico City hotel, where he met with U.S. Embassy staff.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil to discuss the upcoming Summit of the Americas.

April 17

In the morning, the President traveled to Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, arriving in the afternoon.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to the Hyatt Regency Trinidad hotel.

In the evening, the President participated in the Summit of the Americas opening ceremony and cultural event. Later, he met with Prime Minister Patrick Manning of Trinidad and Tobago. He then met with leaders of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

Later in the evening, the President traveled to the Hilton Trinidad & Conference Centre.

The President announced his intention to nominate Christine M. Griffin to be Deputy Director of the Office of Personnel Management.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kevin Concannon to be Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services at the Department of Agriculture.

The President announced his intention to nominate Rajiv J. Shah to be Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics at the Department of Agriculture.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael Nacht to be Assistant Secretary for Global Strategic Affairs at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mercedes Marquez to be Assistant Secretary for Community Planning and Development at the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The President announced his intention to nominate Raymond M. Jefferson to be Assistant Secretary for Veterans Employment and Training at the Department of Labor.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert S. Litt to be General Counsel of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

The President announced his intention to nominate William F. Brinkman to be Director of the Office of Science at the Department of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate Herbert M. Allison, Jr., to be Assistant Secretary for Financial Stability and Counselor to the Secretary at the Department of the Treasury.

The President announced his intention to nominate William J. Wilkins to be Chief Counsel for the Internal Revenue Service and Assistant General Counsel for the Department of the Treasury.

April 18

In the morning, the President traveled to the Hyatt Regency Trinidad hotel, where he attended Plenary Session I of the Summit of the Americas. Later, he participated in a photo opportunity with Prime Minister Stephen Harper of Canada.

In the afternoon, the President participated in the Summit of the Americas official photograph and working lunch. Later, he attended Plenary Sessions II and III of the summit.

In the evening, the President participated in the official Summit of the Americas dinner and cultural performance. Later, he traveled to the Hilton Trinidad & Conference Centre.

April 19

In the morning, the President traveled to the Diplomatic Center, where he participated in the Summit of the Americas leaders retreat.

In the afternoon, the President returned to the Hilton Trinidad & Conference Centre. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

April 20

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Langley, VA, where, at Central Intelligence Agency Headquarters, he met with Director Leon E. Panetta, Deputy Director Stephen R. Kappes, and other CIA officials. Later, he returned to Washington, DC. Then, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President met with professional golfer Tiger Woods.

The President announced that he has nominated Cass R. Sunstein to be Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs at the Office of Management and Budget.

The President announced that he has nominated William K. Sessions III to be Chair of the U.S. Sentencing Commission.

April 21

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing. Then, in the Personal Dining Room, he met with King Abdullah II of Jordan. Later, in the Oval Office, he had an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Then, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with Sen. Edward M. Kennedy and former President William J. Clinton to discuss voluntarism. Later, at Kenilworth Park and Aquatic Gardens, he, Mrs. Obama, Vice President Biden and his wife Jill, and former President Clinton participated in a tree planting event to celebrate Earth Day.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Kevin M. Rudd of Australia to discuss Australia's participation in military operations in Afghanistan.

The President announced his intention to nominate Maria Eitel to be Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation for National and Community Service.

The President announced his intention to nominate William E. Spriggs to be Assistant

Secretary for Policy at the Department of Labor.

The President announced his intention to nominate Rebecca M. Blank to be Under Secretary for Economic Affairs at the Department of Commerce.

The President announced that he has appointed Cindy S. Moelis as Director for the Presidential Commission on White House Fellows.

The President declared a major disaster in Florida and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, tornadoes, and straight-line winds beginning on March 26 and continuing.

April 22

In the morning, the President traveled to Des Moines, IA. He then traveled to Newton, IA, arriving in the afternoon.

Later in the afternoon, the President toured Trinity Structural Towers, Inc., and met with employees. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

The President declared a major disaster in Indiana and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding from March 8–14.

April 23

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Cabinet Room, the President and Vice President Biden met with bipartisan congressional leadership. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Christopher R. Hill.

In the evening, in the Blue Room, the President and Mrs. Obama hosted a reception for Members of Congress and their spouses.

The President announced his intention to nominate Philip Mudd to be Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kurt Campbell to be Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs at the State Department.

The President announced his intention to nominate Eric P. Schwartz to be Assistant Secretary for Population, Refugees, and Migration at the State Department.

The President announced his intention to nominate Edward M. Avalos to be Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs at the Department of Agriculture.

The President declared a major disaster in Georgia and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, tornadoes, and straight-line winds beginning on March 26 and continuing.

April 24

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an economic briefing followed by an intelligence briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had lunch with Vice President Biden.

During the day, the President met with U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan J. Scott Gration.

The President announced his intention to nominate Alejandro N. Mayorkas to be Director of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert O. Blake to be Assistant Secretary for South Asian Affairs at the State Department.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jamie M. Morin to be Assistant Secretary for Financial Management at the Department of the Air Force.

The President announced his intention to nominate Thomas R. Lamont to be Assistant Secretary for Manpower and Reserve Affairs at the Department of the Army.

The President announced his intention to nominate Daniel Benjamin to be Coordinator for Counterterrorism, with the rank and status of Ambassador at Large, at the State Department.

The President announced his intention to nominate Pearlie S. Reed to be Assistant Secretary for Administration at the Department of Agriculture.

The President announced his intention to nominate Craig Becker and Mark Pearce to be members of the National Labor Relations Board.

April 26

In the morning, the President was briefed on the global influenza outbreak.

April 27

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by a briefing on the global influenza outbreak. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had an economic briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Blue Room, the President attended a reception for foreign economic, finance, and environmental ministers.

The President announced his intention to nominate Eric P. Goosby to be Ambassador at Large and Global AIDS Coordinator at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Paul N. Stockton to be Assistant Secretary for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs at the Department of Defense.

The President declared a major disaster in Arkansas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and tornadoes on April 9.

April 28

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. He then had a telephone conversation with Sen. Arlen Specter, who informed him of his decision to switch political parties.

In the afternoon, in the East Room, the President met with the Congressional Progressive Caucus. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

In the evening, in the Blue Room, the President and Mrs. Obama hosted a reception for Cabinet Secretaries.

The President declared a major disaster in Alabama and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, tornadoes, and straight-line winds from March 25 to April 3.

April 29

In the morning, the President traveled to Arnold, MO.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Anthony Wilder Miller to be Deputy Secretary of Education.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mignon L. Clyburn to be a Commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Juan M. Garcia to be Assistant Secretary for Manpower and Reserve Affairs at the Department of the Navy.

April 30

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had a meeting with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Sens. John McCain and Carl Levin and Reps. Isaac N. "Ike" Skelton IV and John M. McHugh to discuss procurement policies reform. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

May 1

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had lunch with Vice President Biden.

He then had a telephone conversation with Supreme Court Associate Justice David H. Souter, who informed him of his decision to retire from the Court. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kathy J. Greenlee to be Assistant Secretary of the Administration on Aging at the Department of Health and Human Services.

The President announced his intention to nominate Wilma A. Lewis to be Assistant Secretary for Land and Mineral Management at the Department of the Interior.

The President announced his intention to nominate John J. Sullivan to be a Commissioner of the Federal Election Commission.

May 2

In the afternoon, the President had a telephone conversation with President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico to discuss the global influenza outbreak.

May 4

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

During the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with Sens. Orrin G. Hatch and Arlen Specter to discuss his plans to consult with Members of Congress regarding the replacement for Supreme Court Associate Justice David H. Souter.

The President announced the designation of U.S. Trade Representative Ronald Kirk as the head of the U.S. delegation that will attend the inauguration of President-elect Jacob Zuma of South Africa on May 9 in Pretoria, South Africa.

May 5

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Later, in the State Dining Room, he and Vice President Joe Biden met with Democratic Members of Congress serving on the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, and the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources to discuss energy independence efforts, health care reform, and other legislative priorities.

In the afternoon, the President and Vice President Biden traveled to Arlington, VA, where they had lunch at Ray's Hell-Burger. They then returned to Washington, DC. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with President Shimon Peres of Israel.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Sen. Jefferson B. Sessions III to discuss the replacement for Supreme Court Associate Justice David H. Souter.

The President announced his intention to nominate Inez Moore Tenenbaum to be Chair of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert S. Adler to be Commissioner of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ellen O'Kane Tauscher to be Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Homer Lee Wilkes to be Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment at the Department of Agriculture.

The President announced his intention to nominate Carmen R. Nazario to be Assistant Secretary for Children and Families at the Department of Health and Human Services.

The President announced his intention to nominate Andrew J. Shapiro to be Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Richard G. Newell to be Administrator of the Energy Information Administration.

May 6

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Hu Jintao of China. Later, in the Oval Office, he had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic

briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

Later in the morning, the President met with Sen. Thomas A. Coburn.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had lunch with Sens. Max S. Baucus and Charles E. Grassley to discuss health care reform. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan. Then, also in the Oval Office, they met with President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan.

The President announced his intention to nominate Tara Jeanne O'Toole to be Under Secretary for Science and Technology at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to nominate Laurie O. Robinson to be Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs at the Department of Justice.

May 7

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Rev. Al Sharpton, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg of New York City, and former Speaker of the House of Representatives Newton L. Gingrich to discuss education reform. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Council of Economic Advisers Chair Christina D. Romer. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

May 8

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Sen. Robert P. Casey, Jr.

The President declared a major disaster in Alabama and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, tornadoes, and straight-line winds from April 10–13.

May 9

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President met with Richard Phillips, captain of the MV *Maersk Alabama* who was rescued from pirates off the coast of Somalia by U.S. Navy SEALs on April 12, and his wife Andrea.

May 11

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, the President met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates to discuss the shooting deaths of five U.S. soldiers at Camp Victory in Baghdad, Iraq.

May 12

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Situation Room, the President and Vice President Joe Biden met with Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, USA commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq, and U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Christopher R. Hill. Later, in the Oval Office, they met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

The President announced his intention to nominate Maria Otero to be Under Secretary for Global Affairs at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Philip L. Verveer to have the rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service as Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Communications and Information Policy in the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs and U.S. Coordinator for International Communications and Information Policy at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Arturo Valenzuela to be Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ignacia S. Moreno to be Assistant Attorney General of the Environment and Natural Resources Division at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to nominate Craig E. Hooks to be Assistant Administrator for the Office of Administration and Resource Management at the Environmental Protection Agency.

The President announced his intention to nominate Nicole Lurie to be Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response at the Department of Health and Human Services.

The President announced his intention to nominate Dennis M. McCarthy to be Assistant Secretary for Reserve Affairs at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate Zachary J. Lemnios to be Director of Defense Research and Engineering at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate Daniel B. Ginsberg to be Assistant Secretary for Manpower and Reserve Affairs at the Department of the Air Force.

The President declared a major disaster in Mississippi and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, and tornadoes from March 25–28.

May 13

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden met with Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi, House Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer, House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Charles B. Rangel, House Energy and Commerce Committee Chairman Henry A. Waxman, and House Education and Labor Committee Chairman George Miller to discuss legislative priorities. Later, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden had an intelligence briefing.

Later in the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an economic briefing, in which Vice President Biden presented him with the first quarterly report on the progress of the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009. Later, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, Senate Minority Leader Addison M. "Mitch" McConnell, and Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Patrick J. Leahy and Ranking Member Jefferson B. Sessions III to discuss his upcoming Supreme Court Associate Justice nomination.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President had lunch with Vice President Biden. Later, he traveled to Phoenix, AZ, arriving in the evening. While en route aboard Air Force One, he participated in an interview with Newsweek magazine, for later publication.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister John P. Key of New Zealand.

Later in the evening, the President traveled to Tempe, AZ. Later, he traveled to Albuquerque, NM.

The President announced his intention to nominate Capricia Penavic Marshall to be Chief of Protocol of the Department of State, with the rank of Ambassador during her tenure of service.

The President announced his intention to nominate Evan J. Segal to be Chief Financial Officer of the Department of Agriculture.

The President announced his intention to nominate Rocco Landesman to be Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts.

The President announced that he has designated Gregory B. Jaczko as Chairman of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

May 14

In the morning, the President traveled to Rio Rancho, NM.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

May 15

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

The President announced his intention to nominate Preet Bharara to be U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York.

The President announced his intention to nominate Tristram Coffin to be U.S. attorney for the District of Vermont.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jenny A. Durkan to be U.S. attorney for the Western District of Washington.

The President announced his intention to nominate Paul J. Fishman to be U.S. attorney for the District of New Jersey.

The President announced his intention to nominate John Paul Kacavas to be U.S. attorney for the District of New Hampshire.

The President announced his intention to nominate Joyce W. Vance to be U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Alabama.

The President announced his intention to nominate Rosa Gumatao Rios to be U.S. Treasurer.

The President announced his intention to nominate Daniel M. Tangherlini to be Assistant Secretary for Management, Chief Financial Officer, and Chief Performance Officer of the Department of the Treasury.

The President announced that he has appointed Thomas R. Frieden as Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The President declared a major disaster in West Virginia and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, mudslides, and landslides beginning on May 3 and continuing.

The President declared a major disaster in Tennessee and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding on April 10.

May 16

The White House announced that the President will visit Moscow, Russia, on July 6–8.

The White House announced that the President will attend the Group of Eight (G–8) summit in L'Aquila, Italy, from July 8–10.

The White House announced that the President and Mrs. Obama will visit Accra, Ghana, from July 10–11.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jon M. Huntsman, Jr., to be Ambassador to China.

May 17

In the morning, the President traveled to South Bend, IN, arriving in the afternoon.

Later in the afternoon, the President traveled to Indianapolis, IN.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

May 18

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Old Family Dining Room, the President had a working lunch with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

May 19

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with former Secretaries of State Henry A. Kissinger and George P. Schultz, former Sen. Samuel A. Nunn, and former Secretary of Defense William J. Perry to discuss nonproliferation efforts. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

During the day, in the Oval Office, the President met with Lt. Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, USA, commander, NATO International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan. He also met with Charles F. Bolden, Jr., to discuss his upcoming nomination of the Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. He also had separate telephone conversations with several bipartisan Members of Congress to discuss his upcoming Supreme Court Associate Justice nomination.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert Perciasepe to be Deputy Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The President announced his intention to nominate Thelma Melendez de Santa Ana to be Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education at the Department of Education.

The President announced his intention to nominate Colin Scott Cole Fulton to be General Counsel of the Environmental Protection Agency.

The President announced his intention to nominate J. Michael Gilmore to be Director of Operational Test and Evaluation at the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate Bartholomew Chilton to be a Commissioner of the U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

The President announced his intention to nominate Cranston J. Mitchell to be a Commissioner of the U.S. Parole Commission.

The President announced his intention to designate Isaac Fulwood, Jr. as Chairman of the U.S. Parole Commission.

May 20

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Then, also in the Oval Office, he participated in a credentialing ceremony for newly appointed Ambassadors to the U.S. Later, he had a telephone conversation with the crew of the Space Shuttle *Atlantis* to congratulate them on repairing the Hubble Space Telescope.

In the evening, in the Blue Room, the President and Mrs. Obama hosted a reception for bipartisan Members of the House of Representatives and their guests.

May 21

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Later, on the South Lawn, he helped assemble care packages for U.S. military personnel serving in Afghanistan and Iraq with members of the Super Bowl champion National Football League's Pittsburgh Steelers and wounded military personnel from Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the National Naval Medical Center and their families. Then, in the Oval Office, he met with President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete of Tanzania.

The President announced his intention to nominate Christopher H. Schroeder to be Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Legal Policy at the Department of Justice.

The President announced his intention to nominate Paul Anastas to be Assistant Administrator for the Office of Research and Development at the Environmental Protection Agency.

The President announced his intention to nominate Sherry Glied to be Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation at the Department of Health and Human Services.

The President announced his intention to nominate Winslow L. Sargeant to be Chief Counsel for Advocacy at the Small Business Administration.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ambassador Nancy J. Powell to be Director General of the Foreign Service at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Deborah Matz to be Chair of the National Credit Union Administration.

The President announced his intention to appoint Max Cleland as Secretary of the American Battle Monuments Commission.

May 22

In the morning, the President traveled to Annapolis, MD.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

May 23

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India to congratulate him on being sworn-in for a second term and to discuss India-U.S. relations. Later, he traveled to Camp David, MD.

The President announced his intention to nominate Charles F. Bolden, Jr., to be Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lori Garver to be Deputy Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

May 24

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

May 25

In the morning, in the State Dining Room, the President had breakfast with Gold Star families. Later, he traveled to Arlington, VA, where he participated in a Memorial Day wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington National Cemetery.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Taro Aso of Japan to discuss North Korea's nuclear test.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea to discuss North Korea's nuclear test and to express his condolences for the death of former President Roh Moo-hyun of South Korea. Later, he had separate telephone conversations with Supreme Court Associate Justice candidates Elena Kagan, Janet A. Napolitano, Diane P. Wood, and Sonia Sotomayor to inform them of his decision to nominate Judge Sotomayor to the position.

May 26

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Later, he had separate telephone conversations with Sens. Patrick J. Leahy, Addison M. "Mitch" McConnell, Harry Reid, and Jefferson B. Sessions III to discuss his nomination of Judge Sotomayor to be an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Later, he traveled to Las Vegas, NV.

May 27

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, at Nellis Air Force Base, NV, he and Sen. Harry Reid toured the solar photovoltaic array.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Los Angeles, CA.

In the evening, at the Beverly Hills Hilton hotel, the President attended a Democratic National Committee fundraiser.

The President announced his intention to nominate Michael A. Battle, Sr., to be U.S. Representative to the African Union with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to nominate Vilma S. Martinez to be Ambassador to Argentina.

The President announced his intention to nominate Thomas A. Shannon, Jr., to be Ambassador to Brazil.

The President announced his intention to nominate Laurie S. Fulton to be Ambassador to Denmark.

The President announced his intention to nominate Charles H. Rivkin to be Ambassador to France.

The President announced his intention to nominate Louis B. Susman to be Ambassador to the United Kingdom.

The President announced his intention to nominate Miguel H. Diaz to be Ambassador to the Holy See.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert S. Connan to be Ambassador to Iceland.

The President announced his intention to nominate Timothy J. Roemer to be Ambassador to India.

The President announced his intention to nominate John V. Roos to be Ambassador to Japan.

The President announced his intention to nominate Christopher W. Dell to be Ambassador to Kosovo.

The President announced his intention to nominate Patricia A. Butenis to be Ambassador to Sri Lanka and Maldives.

The President declared a major disaster in Florida and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, tornadoes, and straight-line winds beginning on May 17 and continuing.

May 28

In the morning, the President returned to Washington, DC, arriving in the afternoon.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

In the evening, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers.

The White House announced that the President will visit wounded U.S. military personnel and their families at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany on June 5.

The President announced his intention to nominate Gordon S. Heddell to be Inspector General of the Department of Defense.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ellen Gloninger Murray to be Assistant Secretary for Resources and Technology at the Department of Health and Human Services.

The President announced his intention to nominate Polly Trottenberg to be Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy at the Department of Transportation.

The President announced his intention to nominate James J. Markowsky to be Assistant Secretary for Fossil Energy at the Department of Energy.

May 29

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Vice President Biden. Later, also in the Oval Office, they had an economic briefing.

Later in the morning, in the Oval Office, the President met with his senior advisers. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with National Economic Council staff members.

The President declared a major disaster in Kentucky and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, tornadoes, flooding, and mudslides from May 3–20.

May 30

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to New York City.

In the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama returned to Washington, DC, arriving the following morning.

May 31

The President announced the designation of a Presidential delegation to San Salvador, El Salvador, to attend the inauguration of President-elect Carlos Mauricio Funes Cartagena on June 1:

Hillary Rodham Clinton (head of delegation);
Robert Blau;
Eliot L. Engel;
William D. Delahunt;
Gregory W. Meeks;
Thomas A. Shannon, Jr.;
Dan Restrepo; and
Alonzo Cantu.

June 1

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, MD, where he visited wounded U.S. military personnel and their families and awarded two Purple Heart medals. Later, he returned to Washington, DC. Then, in the Roosevelt Room, he met with National Economic Council staff members.

June 2

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an economic briefing followed by an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi and House Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer.

In the evening, the President traveled to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, arriving the following afternoon.

The President announced his intention to nominate John M. McHugh to be Secretary of the Army.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert M. McDowell to be a Commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission.

June 3

In the afternoon, upon arrival at King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the President participated in an arrival ceremony with King Abdallah bin Abd al-Aziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. Later, the President traveled to the King's farm, where he

participated in a welcoming reception with King Abdallah.

In the evening, the President had dinner with King Abdallah.

The President announced his intention to nominate James A.S. Leach to be Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The President declared a major disaster in Alabama and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, tornadoes, flooding, and straight-line winds from May 6-8.

June 4

In the morning, the President traveled to Cairo, Egypt. Upon arrival at Cairo Airport, he traveled to Al Quba Palace, where he participated in a welcoming ceremony with President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt. Later, he and Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton toured the Sultan Hassan Mosque.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Cairo University. Later, he toured the pyramids and the Sphinx. He then met with U.S. Embassy staff.

In the evening, the President traveled to Dresden, Germany. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom.

The President announced his intention to nominate Anne S. Ferro to be Administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration at the Department of Transportation.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ernie DuBester to be a member of the Federal Labor Relations Authority.

The President announced his intention to nominate Julia A. Clark to be General Counsel of the Federal Labor Relations Authority.

The President announced his intention to nominate Carlos Pascual to be Ambassador to Mexico.

The President announced his intention to nominate David C. Jacobson to be Ambassador to Canada.

The President announced his intention to nominate James B. Smith to be Ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Donald H. Gips to be Ambassador to South Africa.

The President announced his intention to nominate Patricia N. Moller to be Ambassador to Guinea.

The President announced his intention to nominate Nicole A. Avant to be Ambassador to the Bahamas.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kenneth H. Merten to be Ambassador to Haiti.

The President announced his intention to nominate Anne E. Derse to be Ambassador to Lithuania.

The President announced that he has nominated B. Todd Jones to be U.S. attorney for the District of Minnesota.

June 5

In the morning, the President traveled to Dresden Castle, where he signed the Golden Books for the state of Saxony and the city of Dresden. Later, he and Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany toured the Frauenkirche (Church of Our Lady). He then traveled to Zwinger Palace.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Weimar, Germany. Later, he traveled to Ramstein, Germany.

In the evening, the President visited Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, where he met with wounded U.S. military personnel and medical staff members and awarded six Purple Heart medals to marines and soldiers. He then visited the USO Warrior Center, where he met with and made remarks to military personnel and their families. Later, he traveled to Paris, France.

June 6

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to Caen, France.

In the afternoon, at the Prefecture, the President and Mrs. Obama participated in a welcoming ceremony with President Nicolas Sarkozy of France and his wife Carla Bruni-Sarkozy. Later, he had a working lunch with President Sarkozy.

Later in the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to the Normandy

American Cemetery and Memorial, where they toured the visitor's center, visited the overlook of Omaha Beach, and met with D-Day veterans. Later, they returned to Paris, France, arriving in the evening.

Later in the evening, the President and Mrs. Obama traveled to the U.S. Ambassador's residence, where they were joined by their daughters Sasha and Malia. They then traveled to Notre Dame Cathedral, where they attended a children's choir performance and toured the church. Later, they returned to the U.S. Ambassador's residence.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy to the White House on June 15.

June 7

In the morning, the President, Mrs. Obama, and their daughters Sasha and Malia visited the Pompidou Centre. Later, he returned to the U.S. Ambassador's residence.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

June 8

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai of Zimbabwe to the Oval Office on June 12.

June 9

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he had an economic briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the State Dining Room, the President met with Democratic members of the House Ways and Means Committee. Later, in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

The President announced his intention to nominate Joseph W. Westphal to be Under Secretary of the Army.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert V. Abbey to be Director of the Bureau of Land Management at the Department of the Interior.

The President announced his intention to nominate Sam D. Hamilton to be Director of the Office of Fish and Wildlife Service at the Department of the Interior.

The President announced his intention to nominate Deborah A.P. Hersman to be Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board.

The President announced his intention to nominate Richard A. Lidinsky, Jr., to be a Commissioner of the Federal Maritime Commission.

The President announced his intention to renominate Harry Hoglander to be a member of the National Mediation Board.

June 10

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. He then had a telephone conversation with Virginia gubernatorial candidate R. Creigh Deeds to congratulate him on his Democratic primary election victory.

Later in the morning, also in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max S. Baucus and Ranking Member Charles E. Grassley and Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Ranking Member Michael B. Enzi and Senior Member Christopher J. Dodd to discuss health care reform.

In the afternoon, in the Private Dining Room, the President had lunch with Vice President Biden. He was then briefed on the shooting at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner. Later, also in the

Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

During the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with King Abdullah II of Jordan, President Rafael Correa Delgado of Ecuador, and President Michel Sleiman of Lebanon.

The President announced his intention to nominate Joan M. Evans to be Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Legislative Affairs at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The President announced his intention to nominate Warren F. "Pete" Miller, Jr., to be Assistant Secretary for Nuclear Energy at the Department of Energy.

The President announced his intention to nominate John R. Norris to be a Commissioner of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

June 11

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers. Later, he traveled to Green Bay, WI. Then, at Southwest High School, he met with grassroots activists.

In the afternoon, at Southwest High School, the President met with local political leaders. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate Pamela J.H. Slutz to be Ambassador to Burundi.

The President announced his intention to nominate Gordon Gray to be Ambassador to Tunisia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Richard J. Schmierer to be Ambassador to Oman.

The President announced his intention to nominate Martha L. Campbell to be Ambassador to the Marshall Islands.

The President announced his intention to nominate Alfonso E. Lenhardt to be Ambassador to Tanzania.

The President announced his intention to nominate Mark H. Gitenstein to be Ambassador to Romania.

The President announced his intention to nominate Howard W. Gutman to be Ambassador to Belgium.

The President announced his intention to nominate Don Beyer to be Ambassador to Switzerland and Lichtenstein.

The President announced his intention to nominate Vinai Thummalapally to be Ambassador to Belize.

The President announced his intention to nominate John R. Nay to be Ambassador to Suriname.

The President declared a major disaster in Alaska and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by flooding and ice jams beginning on April 28 and continuing.

The President made additional disaster assistance available to Iowa by authorizing an increase in the level of Federal funding for debris removal and emergency protective measures undertaken as a result of the severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding that struck the State from May 25 to August 13, 2008.

June 12

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by a meeting with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met separately with Sens. Sherrod Brown and Dianne Feinstein.

The White House announced that the President will meet with President Alvaro Uribe Velez of Colombia at the White House on June 29.

The White House announced that the President will meet with President Michelle Bachelet Jeria of Chile at the White House on June 23.

June 15

In the morning, the President traveled to Chicago, IL.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to Libreville, Gabon, to attend the funeral of President Omar Bongo Ondimba on June 16:

Eunice S. Reddick (head of delegation);
Phillip Carter III;

Michael Strautmanis;
Ertharin Cousin; and
Howard Wolpe.

The President announced that he has appointed Kimberly K. Teehee as Senior Policy Adviser for Native American Affairs.

June 16

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Later, also in the Oval Office, they met with President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea.

In the afternoon, in the Old Family Dining Room, the President and Vice President Biden had a working lunch with President Lee. Then, in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, also in the Oval Office, he and Vice President Biden met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

The President announced the designation of the following individuals as members of a Presidential delegation to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, to attend the inauguration of President-elect Tsakhia Elbegdorj of Mongolia on June 18:

Mark C. Minton (head of delegation);
Nicholas M. Hill; and
Stanley Roth.

The President declared a major disaster in Arkansas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding beginning on April 27 and continuing.

The President declared a major disaster in South Dakota and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding beginning on March 11 and continuing.

June 17

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Shaun L.S. Donovan.

The President announced that he has appointed John R. Phillips as Chair of the President's Commission on White House Fellowships.

The President announced that he has appointed Cheryl L. Dorsey as Vice Chair of the President's Commission on White House Fellowships.

The President announced that he has appointed the following individuals as Commissioners of the President's Commission on White House Fellowships:

M. John Berry;
Tom Brokaw;
Wesley K. Clark;
Thomas A. Daschle;
Nelson Diaz;
Helene D. Gayle;
Vartan Gregorian;
Cynthia Hale;
Deborah Harmon;
Christy Haubegger;
Peter Henry;
John Hockenberry;
Claudia Kennedy;
Maya Lin;
George Munoz;
Lloyd W. Newton;
Pierre Omidyar;
Roger B. Porter;
Paul Spyros Sarbanes;
Ruth J. Simmons;
Maya Soetoro-Ng;
George E. Thibault;
Bryan Traubert;
Laurence Tribe;
Eleanor Kaye Wilson; and
Judy Wise.

June 18

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Vice President Joe Biden. He then had a telephone conversation with

National Hockey League's Pittsburgh Penguins head coach Dan Bylsma to congratulate the team on winning the Stanley Cup. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Los Angeles Lakers head coach Phil Jackson to congratulate the team on winning the NBA Finals.

Later in the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Biden met with U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George J. Mitchell. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany to the White House on June 26.

The President announced his intention to nominate David J. Kappos to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

The President announced his intention to nominate Warren F. "Pete" Miller, Jr., to be Director of the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management at the Department of Energy.

June 19

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Arlington, VA, where he toured the Year Up center. Later, he returned to Washington, DC. Then, in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

During the day, in the Map Room, the President participated in an interview with Harry Smith of CBS News.

The President announced his intention to nominate Joseph A. Greenaway, Jr., to be U.S. Circuit judge for the Third Circuit.

The President announced his intention to nominate Beverly B. Martin to be U.S. Circuit judge for the Eleventh Circuit.

The President announced his intention to nominate Matthew W. Barzun to be Ambassador to Sweden.

The President announced his intention to nominate John R. Bass to be Ambassador to Georgia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Ertharin Cousin to be U.S. Representative to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations with the rank of Ambassador during her tenure of service.

The President announced his intention to nominate James B. Foley to be Ambassador to Croatia.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kenneth E. Gross, Jr., to be Ambassador to Tajikistan.

The President announced his intention to nominate Samuel L. Kaplan to be Ambassador to Morocco.

The President announced his intention to nominate Jerry P. Lanier to be Ambassador to Uganda.

The President announced his intention to nominate Teddy B. Taylor to be Ambassador to the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Papua New Guinea.

The President declared a major disaster in Oklahoma and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by wildfires from April 9–12.

The President declared a major disaster in Missouri and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, tornadoes, and flooding from May 8–16.

June 22

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

June 23

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers. Later, he had a telephone conversation with President Valdas Adamkus of Lithuania.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Kevin M. Rudd of Australia.

The White House announced that the President will welcome Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende of the Netherlands to the White House on July 14.

The President declared an emergency in Oklahoma and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local response efforts in the area struck by record snow and near-record snow on March 27 and 28.

June 24

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Roosevelt Room, the President and Vice President Joe Biden met with Govs. Jennifer M. Granholm of Michigan, James H. Douglas of Vermont, James E. Doyle, of Wisconsin, M. Michael Rounds of South Dakota, and Christine O. Gregoire of Washington to discuss health care reform. Later, in the Oval Office, he participated in a bill signing ceremony for H.R. 2346, the Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2009.

The President announced his intention to nominate Rafael Borras to be Under Secretary for Management at the Department of Homeland Security.

The President announced his intention to nominate James L. Hudson to be Director of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

The President announced his intention to nominate Brenda Dann-Messier to be Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education at the Department of Education.

The President announced his intention to nominate Kerri-Ann Jones to be Assistant Secretary for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs at the Department of State.

The President announced his intention to nominate Bryan H. Samuels to be Commissioner of the Administration on Children, Youth, and Families at the Department of Health and Human Services.

The President announced his intention to nominate Christopher A. Hart to be a member of the National Transportation Safety Board.

The President declared a major disaster in Kansas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by a severe winter storm and record or near-record snow from March 26–29.

June 25

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President and Vice President Joe Biden had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. Later, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

The President announced his intention to nominate William C. Eacho III to be Ambassador to Austria.

The President announced his intention to nominate Judith G. Garber to be Ambassador to Latvia.

The President announced his intention to nominate David Killion to be U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) with the rank of Ambassador.

The President announced his intention to nominate James Knight to be Ambassador to Benin.

The President announced his intention to nominate Karen Kornbluh to be Permanent Representative to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

The President announced his intention to nominate Bruce J. Oreck to be Ambassador to Finland.

The President announced his intention to nominate Charles A. Ray to be Ambassador to Zimbabwe.

The President announced his intention to nominate David Thorne to be Ambassador to Italy and San Marino.

The President announced his intention to nominate Meredith Attwell Baker to be Commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission.

The President announced that he has nominated Charlene E. Honeywell to be U.S. district judge for the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida.

The President announced that he has nominated Jeffrey L. Viken to be U.S. district judge for the U.S. District Court for South Dakota.

The President declared a major disaster in Kansas and ordered Federal aid to supplement State and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding, straight-line winds, and tornadoes from April 25 to May 16.

June 26

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing.

In the afternoon, in the Old Family Dining Room, the President had a working lunch with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany. Later, in the Oval Office, he met with Vice President Joe Biden. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Mohamed Najib bin Abdul Razak of Malaysia. He also had separate telephone conversations with several Members of Congress to discuss energy legislation. He also had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom.

In the evening, on the South Lawn, the President and Mrs. Obama hosted a picnic for White House staff.

June 29

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

The President announced his intention to nominate Peggy E. Gustafson to be Inspector General of the Small Business Administration.

The President announced his intention to nominate George H. Cohen to be Director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.

June 30

In the morning, in the Oval Office, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by an economic briefing. Then, also in the Oval Office, he met with his senior advisers.

In the afternoon, in the Oval Office, the President met with Secretary of Energy Steven Chu.

During the day, the President had a telephone conversation with President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia.

Appendix B—Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service Officers.

Submitted January 20

Steven Chu,
of California, to be Secretary of Energy.

Hillary Rodham Clinton,
of New York, to be Secretary of State.

Thomas Andrew Daschle,
of South Dakota, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Shaun L.S. Donovan,
of New York, to be Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Arne Duncan,
of Illinois, to be Secretary of Education.

Timothy F. Geithner,
of New York, to be Secretary of the Treasury.

Eric H. Holder, Jr.,
of the District of Columbia, to be Attorney General.

Lisa Perez Jackson,
of New Jersey, to be Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Ronald Kirk,
of Texas, to be U.S. Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

Ray LaHood,
of Illinois, to be Secretary of Transportation.

Janet Ann Napolitano,
of Arizona, to be Secretary of Homeland Security.

Peter R. Orszag,
of Massachusetts, to be Director of the Office of Management and Budget.

Susan E. Rice,
of the District of Columbia, to be Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, with the rank and status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, and the Representative of the United States of America in the Security Council of the United Nations.

Susan E. Rice,
of the District of Columbia, to be Representative of the United States of America to the Sessions of the General Assembly of the United Nations during her tenure of service as Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations.

Christina Duckworth Romer,
of California, to be a member of the Council of Economic Advisers, vice Edward P. Lazear.

Kenneth Lee Salazar,
of Colorado, to be Secretary of the Interior.

Eric K. Shinseki,
of Hawaii, to be Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Hilda L. Solis,
of California, to be Secretary of Labor.

Thomas J. Vilsack,
of Iowa, to be Secretary of Agriculture.

Dennis Cutler Blair,
of Pennsylvania, to be Director of National Intelligence, vice J. Michael McConnell, resigned.

Michele A. Flournoy,
of Maryland, to be Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, vice Eric S. Edelman, resigned.

Gary Gensler,
of Maryland, to be Commissioner of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission for a term expiring April 13, 2012, vice Rueben Jeffery III, resigned.

Gary Gensler,
of Maryland, to be Chairman of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, vice Rueben Jeffery III, resigned.

Austan Dean Goolsbee,
of Illinois, to be a member of the Council of Economic Advisers, vice Katherine Baicker, resigned.

Robert F. Hale,
of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), vice Tina Westby Jonas, resigned.

John P. Holdren,
of Massachusetts, to be Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, vice John M. Marburger III.

Jeh Charles Johnson,
of New York, to be General Counsel of the Department of Defense, vice William J. Haynes II, resigned.

Jacob J. Lew,
of New York, to be Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources (new position).

Jane Lubchenco,
of Oregon, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, vice Conrad Lautenbacher, Jr., resigned.

William J. Lynn III,
of the District of Columbia, to be Deputy Secretary of Defense, vice Gordon England.

Robert L. Nabors II,
of New Jersey, to be Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget, vice Stephen S. McMillin, resigned.

Cecilia Elena Rouse,
of California, to be a member of the Council of Economic Advisers, vice Donald B. Marron, resigned.

Mary L. Schapiro,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Securities and Exchange Commission for a term expiring June 5, 2014, vice Christopher Cox, resigned.

James Braidy Steinberg,
of Texas, to be Deputy Secretary of State, vice John D. Negroponte.

Nancy Helen Sutley,
of California, to be a member of the Council on Environmental Quality, vice James Laurence Connaughton.

Daniel K. Tarullo,
Of Massachusetts, to be a member of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System for a term of 14 years from February 1, 2008, vice Randall S. Kroszner, term expired.

Submitted January 26

Elena Kagan,
of Massachusetts, to be Solicitor General of the United States, vice Gregory G. Garre, resigned.

David W. Ogden,
of Virginia, to be Deputy Attorney General, vice Mark R. Filip.

Submitted January 27

Timothy F. Geithner,
of New York, to be the U.S. Governor of the International Monetary Fund for a term of 5 years; U.S. Governor of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development for a term of 5 years; U.S. Governor of the Inter-American Development Bank for a term of 5 years; U.S. Governor of the African Development Bank for a term of 5 years; U.S. Governor of the Asian Development Bank; U.S. Governor of the African Development Fund; U.S. Governor of the European Bank

for Reconstruction and Development, vice Henry M. Paulson, Jr., resigned.

Submitted January 30

Leon E. Panetta,
of California, to be Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, vice General Michael V. Hayden, U.S.A.F.

Thomas John Perrelli,
of Virginia, to be Associate Attorney General, vice Kevin J. O'Connor, resigned.

Withdrawn February 9

Thomas Andrew Daschle,
of South Dakota, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services, which was sent to the Senate on January 20, 2009.

Submitted February 11

David S. Kris,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Attorney General, vice J. Patrick Rowan, resigned.

Dawn Elizabeth Johnsen,
of Indiana, to be an Assistant Attorney General, vice Jack Landman Goldsmith III, resigned.

Lanny A. Breuer,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Attorney General, vice Alice S. Fisher, resigned.

Christine Anne Varney,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Attorney General, vice Thomas O. Barnett, resigned.

Submitted February 25

Jane Holl Lute,
of New York, to be Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security, vice Paul A. Schneider, resigned.

Tony West,
of California, to be an Assistant Attorney General, vice Gregory G. Katsas, resigned.

Submitted February 27

David J. Hayes,
of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of the Interior, vice Patricia Lynn Scarlett, resigned.

Karen Gordon Mills,
of Maine, to be Administrator of the Small Business Administration, vice Steven C. Preston, resigned.

Submitted March 3

Seth David Harris,
of New Jersey, to be Deputy Secretary of Labor, vice Howard Radzely, resigned.
Submitted March 4

John Berry,
of the District of Columbia, to be Director of the Office of Personnel Management for a term of 4 years, vice Linda M. Springer, resigned.

Ronald C. Sims,
of Washington, to be Deputy Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, vice Romolo A. Bernardi, resigned.

Submitted March 10

Sherburne B. Abbott,
of Texas, to be an Associate Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, vice Duncan T. Moore, resigned.

David S. Cohen,
of Maryland, to be Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing, Department of the Treasury, vice Patrick M. O'Brien, resigned.

Dana G. Gresham,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Transportation, vice Simon Charles Gros.

Alan B. Krueger,
of New Jersey, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, vice Phillip L. Swagel, resigned.

James N. Miller, Jr.,
of Virginia, to be Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, vice Christopher Ryan Henry.

John Morton,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security, vice Julie L. Myers, resigned.

Submitted March 11

Esther Brimmer,
of the District of Colombia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (International Organization Affairs), vice Brian H. Hook, resigned.

Jonathan Z. Cannon,
of Virginia, to be Deputy Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Marcus C. Peacock, resigned.

Ivo H. Daalder,
of Virginia, to be U.S. Permanent Representative on the Council of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, with the rank and status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

Karl Winfrid Eikenberry,
of Florida, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Ivan K. Fong,
of Ohio, to be General Counsel, Department of Homeland Security, vice Philip J. Perry, resigned.

Philip H. Gordon,
of the District of Colombia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (European and Eurasian Affairs), vice Daniel Fried, resigned.

W. Scott Gould,
of the District of Colombia, to be Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs, vice Gordon H. Mansfield, resigned.

Christopher R. Hill,
of Rhode Island, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Career Minister, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Iraq.

Richard Rahul Verma,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Legislative Affairs), vice Matthew A. Reynolds, resigned.

Melanne Verveer,
of the District of Colombia, to be Ambassador at Large for Women's Global Issues.

Submitted March 12

Thomas L. Strickland,
of Colorado, to be Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife, vice R. Lyle Laverty.

Alexander Vershbow,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice Mary Beth Long, resigned.

Submitted March 16

Ladda Tammy Duckworth,
of Illinois, to be an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Public and Intergovernmental Affairs), vice Lisette M. Mondello, resigned.

R. Gil Kerlikowske,
of Washington, to be Director of National Drug Control Policy, vice John P. Walters, resigned.

Roy W. Kienitz,
of Pennsylvania, to be Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy, vice Jeffrey Shane, resigned.

Gary Locke,
of Washington, to be Secretary of Commerce.

Demetrios J. Marantis,
of the District of Columbia, to be a Deputy U.S. Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador, vice Peter F. Allgeier, resigned.

Regina McCarthy,
of Massachusetts, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Jeffrey R. Holmstead, resigned.

Kim N. Wallace,
of Texas, to be a Deputy Under Secretary of the Treasury, vice Kevin I. Fromer, resigned.

Submitted March 17

William V. Corr,
of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Services, vice Tevi David Troy, resigned.

David F. Hamilton,
of Indiana, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Seventh Circuit, vice Kenneth F. Ripple, retired.

William Craig Fugate,
of Florida, to be Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, vice R. David Paulison.

Rose Eilene Gottemoeller,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Verification and Compliance), vice Paula A. DeSutter, resigned.

Demetrios J. Marantis,
of the District of Columbia, to be a Deputy U.S. Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador, vice Karan K. Bhatia, resigned.

Kathleen Sebelius,
of Kansas, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Withdrawn March 17

Demetrios J. Marantis,
of the District of Columbia, to be a Deputy United States Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador, vice Peter F. Allgeier, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on March 16, 2009.

Submitted March 18

Russlynn Ali,
of California, to be Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Department of Education, vice Stephanie Johnson Monroe, resigned.

Susan Flood Burk,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Executive Service, to be Special Representative of the President, with the rank of Ambassador.

Ashton B. Carter,
of Massachusetts, to be Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, vice John J. Young, Jr.

Carmel Martin,
of Maryland, to be Assistant Secretary for Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, Department of Education, vice Williamson Evers, resigned.

James W. Miller,
of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services, vice Mark Everett Keenum, resigned.

Charles P. Rose,
of Illinois, to be General Counsel, Department of Education, vice Kent D. Talbert, resigned.

Ronald H. Weich,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Attorney General, vice William Emil Moschella.

Submitted March 19

April S. Boyd,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Commerce, vice Nathaniel F. Wienecke, resigned.

Peter Cunningham,
of Illinois, to be Assistant Secretary for Communications and Outreach, Department of Education, vice Lauren M. Maddox.

Michelle DePass,
of New York, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Judith Elizabeth Ayres, resigned.

Brian Vincent Kennedy,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Labor, vice Kristine Ann Iverson, resigned.

Kathleen A. Merrigan,
of Massachusetts, to be Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, vice Charles F. Conner, resigned.

Submitted March 23

Lael Brainard,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Under Secretary of the Treasury, vice David H. McCormick, resigned.

Johnnie Carson,
of Illinois, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (African Affairs), vice Jendayi Elizabeth Frazer, resigned.

Julius Genachowski,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Federal Communications Commission for a term of 5 years from July 1, 2008, vice Jonathan Steven Adelstein, term expired.

Cynthia J. Giles,
of Rhode Island, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Granta Y. Nakayama, resigned.

Kristina M. Johnson,
of Maryland, to be Under Secretary of Energy, vice Clarence H. Albright, resigned.

Harold Hongju Koh,
of Connecticut, to be Legal Adviser of the Department of State, vice John B. Bellinger III, resigned.

Joe Leonard, Jr.,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, vice Margo M. McKay, resigned.

Submitted March 24

Marisa J. Demeo,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of 15 years, vice Rufus Gunn King III, retired.

Florence Y. Pan,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of 15 years, vice Linda Turner Hamilton.

Withdrawn March 24

Stuart Gordon Nash,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of 15 years, vice Rufus Gunn King III, retired, which was sent to the Senate on January 8, 2009.

Submitted March 25

Margaret A. Hamburg,
of the District of Columbia, to be Commissioner of Food and Drugs, Department of Health and Human Services, vice Andrew von Eschenbach, resigned.

Peter A. Kovar,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, vice Sheila McNamara Greenwood.

Dallas P. Tonsager,
of South Dakota, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Rural Development, vice Thomas C. Dorr, resigned.

Submitted March 26

Luis C. de Baca,
of Virginia, to be Director of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking, with the rank of Ambassador at Large, vice Mark P. Lagon, resigned.

T. Michael Kerr,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Labor, vice Patrick Pizzella, resigned.

Steven Elliot Koonin,
of California, to be Under Secretary for Science, Department of Energy, vice Raymond L. Orbach, resigned.

Linda A. Puchala,
of Maryland, to be a member of the National Mediation Board for a term expiring July 1, 2009, vice Read Van de Water, term expired.

Linda A. Puchala,
of Maryland, to be a member of the National Mediation Board for a term expiring July 1, 2012 (reappointment).

Yvette Roubideaux,
of Arizona, to be Director of the Indian Health Service, Department of Health and Human Services, for the term of 4 years, vice Robert G. McSwain, resigned.

Joseph C. Szabo,
of Illinois, to be Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration, vice Joseph H. Boardman.

Submitted March 31

Thomas E. Perez,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Attorney General, vice Wan J. Kim.

Lawrence E. Strickling,
of Illinois, to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information, vice John M.R. Kneuer.

Hilary Chandler Tompkins,
of New Mexico, to be Solicitor of the Department of the Interior, vice David Longly Bernhardt, resigned.

Ines R. Triay,
of New Mexico, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy (Environmental Management), vice James A. Rispoli, resigned.

Withdrawn March 31

Jonathan Z. Cannon,
of Virginia, to be Deputy Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Marcus C. Peacock, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on March 11, 2009.

Submitted April 2

Andre M. Davis,
of Maryland, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Fourth Circuit, vice Francis D. Murnaghan, Jr., deceased.

Gerard E. Lynch,
of New York, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Second Circuit, vice Chester J. Straub, retired.

Jo-Ellen Darcy,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army, vice John Paul Woodley, Jr.

Krysta Harden,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, vice Linda Avery Strachan, resigned.

Scott Blake Harris,
of Virginia, to be General Counsel of the Department of Energy, vice David R. Hill, resigned.

Timothy W. Manning,
of New Mexico, to be Deputy Administrator for National Preparedness, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security, vice Dennis R. Schrader.

John U. Sepulveda,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Human Resources), vice Michael W. Hager.

Submitted April 20

Peter H. Appel,
of Virginia, to be Administrator of the Research and Innovative Technology Administration, Department of Transportation, vice Paul R. Brubaker, resigned.

Helen R. Kanovsky,
of Maryland, to be General Counsel of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, vice Robert M. Couch.

Cameron F. Kerry,
of Massachusetts, to be General Counsel of the Department of Commerce, vice Lily Fu Claffee, resigned.

Robert S. Rivkin,
of Illinois, to be General Counsel of the Department of Transportation, vice David James Gribbin IV, resigned.

William K. Sessions III,
of Vermont, to be Chair of the United States Sentencing Commission, vice Ricardo H. Hinojosa.

John D. Trasvina,
of California, to be an Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, vice Kim Kendrick, resigned.

Roger W. Baker,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Information and Technology), vice Robert T. Howard, resigned.

Rand Beers,
of the District of Columbia, to be Under Secretary, Department of Homeland Security, vice Robert D. Jamison, resigned.

Raphael William Bostic,
of California, to be an Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, vice Darlene F. Williams, resigned.

Michael L. Connor,
of Maryland, to be Commissioner of Reclamation, vice Robert W. Johnson.

Philip J. Crowley,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Public Affairs), vice Sean Ian McCormack, resigned.

John Q. Easton,
of Illinois, to be Director of the Institute of Education Science, Department of Education for a term of 6 years, vice Grover J. Whitehurst, term expired.

Larry J. EchoHawk,
of Utah, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior, vice Carl Joseph Artman, resigned.

Jeffrey D. Feltman,
of Ohio, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Near Eastern Affairs), vice C. David Welch, resigned.

Gabriella Cecilia Gomez,
of California, to be Assistant Secretary for Legislation and Congressional Affairs, Department of Education, vice Holly A. Kuzmich, resigned.

Wallace C. Gregson,
of Colorado, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice James Shinn.

William A. Gunn,
of Virginia, to be General Counsel, Department of Veterans Affairs, vice Paul J. Hutter.

Priscilla E. Guthrie,
of Virginia, to be Chief Information Officer, Office of the Director of National Intelligence, vice Dale W. Meyerrose, resigned.

Sandra Brooks Henriquez,
of Massachusetts, to be an Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, vice Orlando J. Cabrera.

Fred P. Hochberg,
of New York, to be President of the Export-Import Bank of the United States for a term expiring January 20, 2013, vice James Lambright, term expired.

Bonnie D. Jenkins,
of New York, for the rank of Ambassador during her tenure of service as Coordinator for Threat Reduction Programs.

Elizabeth Lee King,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice Robert L. Wilkie, resigned.

Howard K. Koh,
of Massachusetts, to be an Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services, vice Joxel Garcia, resigned.

Raymond Edwin Mabus, Jr.,
of Mississippi, to be Secretary of the Navy, vice Donald C. Winter.

George Wheeler Madison,
of Connecticut, to be General Counsel for the Department of the Treasury, vice Robert F. Hoyt, resigned.

Kathleen Martinez,
of California, to be an Assistant Secretary of Labor, vice Neil Romano, resigned.

Judith A. McHale,
of Maryland, to be Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy, vice James K. Glassman, resigned.

A. Thomas McLellan,
of Pennsylvania, to be Deputy Director of National Drug Control Policy, vice Scott M. Burns, resigned.

Michael Nacht,
of California, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice Joseph A. Benkert.

Daniel B. Poneman,
of Virginia, to be Deputy Secretary of Energy, vice Jeffrey Clay Sell, resigned.

Donald Michael Remy,
of Virginia, to be General Counsel of the Department of the Army, vice Benedict S. Cohen, resigned.

Jose D. Riojas,
of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Operations, Security, and Preparedness), vice Charles L. Hopkins, resigned.

Francisco J. Sanchez,
of Florida, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for International Trade, vice Christopher A. Padilla, resigned.

David B. Sandalow,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy (International Affairs and Domestic Policy), vice Karen Alderman Harbert, resigned.

Miriam E. Sapiro,
of the District of Columbia, to be a Deputy U.S. Trade Representative, with the rank of Ambassador, vice John K. Veroneau, resigned.

Peter S. Silva,
of California, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Benjamin Grumbles, resigned.

M. Patricia Smith,
of New York, to be Solicitor for the Department of Labor, vice Gregory F. Jacob, resigned.

Mary L. Smith,
of Illinois, to be an Assistant Attorney General, vice Nathan J. Hochman, resigned.

Mathy Stanislaus,
of New Jersey, to be Assistant Administrator, Office of Solid Waste, Environmental Protection Agency, vice Susan P. Bodine, resigned.

Rhea S. Suh,
of California, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior, vice R. Thomas Weimer, resigned.

Cass R. Sunstein,
of Massachusetts, to be Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, vice Susan E. Dudley.

Neal S. Wolin,
of Illinois, to be Deputy Secretary of the Treasury, vice Robert M. Kimmitt, resigned.

Robert O. Work,
of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of the Navy, vice Dionel M. Aviles, resigned.

Submitted April 21

David H. Stevens,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, vice Brian D. Montgomery.

Jonathan Steven Adelstein,
of South Dakota, to be Administrator, Rural Utilities Service, Department of Agriculture, vice James M. Andrew, resigned.

Thomasina Rogers,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission for a term expiring April 27, 2015 (reappointment).

Submitted April 23

Victor M. Mendez,
of Arizona, to be Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration, vice Thomas J. Madison, resigned.

Stephen Alan Owens,
of Arizona, to be Assistant Administrator for Toxic Substances of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice James B. Gulliford, resigned.

Rajiv J. Shah,
of Washington, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Research, Education, and Economics, vice Gale A. Buchanan, resigned.

Submitted April 27

Daniel Benjamin,
of the District of Columbia, to be Coordinator for Counterterrorism, with the rank and status of Ambassador at Large, vice Dell L. Dailey, resigned.

Robert Orris Blake, Jr.,
of Maryland, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, vice Richard A. Boucher, resigned.

Phyllis Corrine Borzi,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of Labor, vice Bradford P. Campbell, resigned.

William F. Brinkman,
of New Jersey, to be Director of the Office of Science, Department of Energy, vice Raymond L. Orbach, resigned.

Kurt M. Campbell,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (East Asian and Pacific Affairs), vice Christopher R. Hill, resigned.

Anne Castle,
of Colorado, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior, vice Mark A. Limbaugh.

David Heyman,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security, vice Stewart A. Baker, resigned.

Thomas R. Lamont,
of Illinois, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Army, vice Ronald J. James.

John D. Porcari,
of Maryland, to be Deputy Secretary of Transportation, vice Thomas J. Barrett, resigned.

Pearlie S. Reed,
of Arkansas, to be an Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, vice Boyd Kevin Rutherford.

Catherine Radford Zoi,
of California, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy (Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy), vice Alexander A. Karsner, resigned.

Submitted April 28

Rebecca M. Blank,
of Maryland, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Economic Affairs, vice Cynthia A. Glassman, resigned.

Robert S. Litt,
of Maryland, to be General Counsel of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, vice Benjamin A. Powell, resigned.

Laurie I. Mikva,
of Illinois, to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Legal Services Corporation for a term expiring July 13, 2010, vice Florentino Subia, term expired.

Paul N. Stockton,
of California, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice Paul McHale, resigned.

Submitted April 29

Eric P. Goosby,
of California, to be Ambassador at Large and Coordinator of United States Government Activities to Combat HIV/AIDS Globally.

Martha J. Kanter,
of California, to be Under Secretary of Education, vice Sara Alicia Tucker, resigned.

Peter M. Rogoff,
of Virginia, to be Federal Transit Administrator, vice James S. Simpson, resigned.

Andrew Charles Weber,
of Virginia, to be Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Nuclear and Chemical and Biological Defense Programs, vice Frederick S. Celec.

Kevin W. Concannon,
of Maine, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services, vice Nancy Montanez-Johner, resigned.

Robert M. Groves,
of Michigan, to be Director of the Census, vice Steven H. Murdock, resigned.

Submitted April 30

Charles A. Blanchard,
of Arizona, to be General Counsel of the Department of the Air Force, vice Mary L. Walker, resigned.

Submitted May 1

Herbert M. Allison, Jr.,
of Connecticut, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury (new position).

Michael S. Barr,
of Michigan, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, vice David George Nason, resigned.

Submitted May 4

Kathy J. Greenlee,
of Kansas, to be Assistant Secretary for Aging, Department of Health and Human Services, vice Josefina Carbonell, resigned.

Martha N. Johnson,
of Maryland, to be Administrator of General Services, vice Lurita Alexis Doan, resigned.

Mercedes Marquez,
of California, to be an Assistant Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, vice Susan D. Peppler, resigned.

Philip Mudd,
of Virginia, to be Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis, Department of Homeland Security (new position).

John J. Sullivan,
of Maryland, to be a member of the Federal Election Commission for a term expiring April 30, 2013, vice Ellen L. Weintraub, term expired.

Submitted May 6

Wilma A. Lewis,
of the Virgin Islands, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Interior, vice C. Stephen Allred, resigned.

Carmen R. Nazario,
of Puerto Rico, to be Assistant Secretary for Family Support, Department of Health and Human Services, vice Diane D. Rath.

Jane Oates,
of New Jersey, to be an Assistant Secretary of Labor, vice Emily Stover DeRocco.

Tara Jeanne O'Toole,
of Maryland, to be Under Secretary for Science and Technology, Department of Homeland Security, vice Jay M. Cohen, resigned.

Eric P. Schwartz,
of New York, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Population, Refugees, and Migration), vice Ellen R. Sauerbrey.

Andrew J. Shapiro,
of New York, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Political-Military Affairs), vice Mark Kimmitt, resigned.

Ellen O. Tauscher,
of California, to be Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, vice Robert Joseph, resigned.

Submitted May 11

J. Randolph Babbitt,
of Virginia, to be Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration for the term of 5 years, vice Marion C. Blakey, term expired.

Lorelei Boylan,
of New York, to be Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division, Department of Labor, vice Paul DeCamp.

Jamie Michael Morin,
of Michigan, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, vice John H. Gibson, resigned.

Stephen Woolman Preston,
of the District of Columbia, to be General Counsel of the Central Intelligence Agency, vice Scott W. Muller, resigned.

Submitted May 12

William J. Wilkins,
of the District of Columbia, to be Chief Counsel for the Internal Revenue Service and an Assistant General Counsel in the Department of the Treasury, vice Donald Korb, resigned.

Jeffrey D. Zients,
of the District of Columbia, to be Deputy Director for Management, Office of Management and Budget, vice Clay Johnson III, resigned.

Christine M. Griffin,
of Massachusetts, to be Deputy Director of the Office of Personnel Management, vice Howard Charles Weizmann, resigned.

Submitted May 14

Aneesh Chopra,
of Virginia, to be an Associate Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy, vice Richard M. Russell, resigned.

Capricia Penavic Marshall,
of the District of Columbia, to be Chief of Protocol, and to have the rank of Ambassador during her tenure of service, vice Nancy Goodman Brinker, resigned.

Submitted May 18

Zachary J. Lemnios,
of Massachusetts, to be Director of Defense Research and Engineering, vice John J. Young, Jr.

Anthony W. Miller,
of California, to be Deputy Secretary of Education, vice Raymond Simon, resigned.

Richard G. Newell,
of North Carolina, to be Administrator of the Energy Information Administration, vice Guy F. Caruso.

Rosa Gumataotao Rios,
of California, to be Treasurer of the United States, vice Anna Escobedo Cabral, resigned.

Submitted May 19

Philip L. Verveer,
of the District of Columbia, for the rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Communications and Information Policy in the Bureau of Economic, Energy, and Business Affairs and U.S. Coordinator for International Communications and Information Policy.

Submitted May 20

Bartholomew Chilton,
of Maryland, to be a Commissioner of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission for a term expiring April 13, 2013 (reappointment).

Colin Scott Cole Fulton,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Roger Romulus Martella, Jr.

Alejandro N. Mayorkas,
of California, to be Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Department of Homeland Security, vice Emilio T. Gonzalez.

Submitted May 21

Paul T. Anastas,
of Connecticut, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice George M. Gray, resigned.

Cranston J. Mitchell,
of Virginia, to be a Commissioner of the U.S. Parole Commission for a term of 6 years (reappointment).

Nancy J. Powell,
of Iowa, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Career Minister, to be Director General of the Foreign Service, vice Harry K. Thomas, Jr., resigned.

Submitted June 1

Patricia A. Butenis,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Maldives.

Christopher William Dell,
of New Jersey, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Kosovo.

J. Michael Gilmore,
of Virginia, to be Director of Operational Test and Evaluation, Department of Defense, vice Charles E. McQueary.

Gordon S. Heddell,
of the District of Columbia, to be Inspector General, Department of Defense, vice Claude M. Kicklighter, resigned.

Nicole Lurie,
of Maryland, to be Medical Director in the Regular Corps of the Public Health Service, subject to qualifications therefor as provided by law and regulations, and to be Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response, Department of Health and Human Services, vice W. Craig Vanderwagen, resigned.

Deborah Matz,
of Virginia, to be a member of the National Credit Union Administration Board for a term expiring April 10, 2015, vice Rodney E. Hood, term expired.

Dennis M. McCarthy,
of Ohio, to be an Assistant Secretary of Defense, vice Thomas Forrest Hall.

Ellen Gloninger Murray,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services, vice Charles E. Johnson, resigned.

Charles H. Rivkin,
of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to France, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Monaco.

Evan J. Segal,
of Pennsylvania, to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of Agriculture, vice Charles R. Christopherson, Jr., resigned.

Thomas Alfred Shannon, Jr.,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Career Minister, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Federative Republic of Brazil.

Sonia Sotomayor,
of New York, to be an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, vice David H. Souter, retiring.

Submitted June 2

Daniel Ginsberg,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, vice Craig W. Duehring.

Louis B. Susman,
of Illinois, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Submitted June 3

Laurie Susan Fulton,
of Virginia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Denmark.

Raymond M. Jefferson,
of Hawaii, to be Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans' Employment and Training, vice Charles S. Ciccolella, resigned.

Daniel M. Tangherlini,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, vice Peter B. McCarthy, resigned.

Daniel M. Tangherlini,
of the District of Columbia, to be Chief Financial Officer, Department of the Treasury, vice Peter B. McCarthy, resigned.

Submitted June 4

Preet Bharara,
of New York, to be U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York for the term of 4 years, vice Michael J. Garcia, resigned.

Julia Akins Clark,
of Maryland, to be General Counsel of the Federal Labor Relations Authority for a term of 5 years, vice Colleen Duffy Kiko, resigned.

Tristram J. Coffin,
of Vermont, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Vermont for the term of 4 years, vice Thomas D. Anderson, resigned.

Ernest W. DuBester,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Federal Labor Relations Authority for a term of 5 years expiring July 29, 2012, vice Dale Cabaniss, resigned.

Jenny A. Durkan,
of Washington, to be U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Washington for the term of 4 years, vice John McKay, resigned.

Paul Joseph Fishman,
of New Jersey, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of New Jersey for the term of 4 years, vice Christopher James Christie, resigned.

B. Todd Jones,
of Minnesota, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of Minnesota for the term of 4 years, vice Rachel K. Paulose, resigned.

John P. Kacavas,
of New Hampshire, to be U.S. Attorney for the District of New Hampshire for the term of 4 years, vice Thomas P. Colantuono, resigned.

Christopher H. Schroeder,
of North Carolina, to be an Assistant Attorney General, vice Elisebeth C. Cook, resigned.

Joyce White Vance,
of Alabama, to be U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Alabama for the term of 4 years, vice Alice Howze Martin.

Submitted June 8

Anne Elizabeth Derse,
of Maryland, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Lithuania.

David C. Jacobson,
of Illinois, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Canada.

Robert Malcolm McDowell,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Federal Communications Commission for a term of 5 years from July 1, 2009 (reappointment).

Thelma Melendez de Santa Ana,
of California, to be Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, Department of Education, vice Kerri Layne Briggs.

Ignacia S. Moreno,
of New York, to be an Assistant Attorney General, vice Ronald Jay Tenpas, resigned.

Stuart Gordon Nash,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Associate Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia for the term of 15 years, vice Rafael Diaz, term expired.

Carlos Pascual,
of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Mexico.

Winslow Lorenzo Sargeant,
of Wisconsin, to be Chief Counsel for Advocacy, Small Business Administration, vice Thomas M. Sullivan.

Polly Trottenberg,
of Maryland, to be an Assistant Secretary of Transportation, vice Tyler D. Duvall, resigned.

Arturo A. Valenzuela,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Assistant Secretary of State (Western Hemisphere Affairs), vice Thomas A. Shannon, Jr., resigned.

Submitted June 9

Robert S. Adler,
of North Carolina, to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission for a term of 7 years from October 27, 2007, vice Stuart M. Statler, resigned.

Kenneth H. Merten,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Haiti.

Maria Otero,
of the District of Columbia, to be an Under Secretary of State (Democracy and Global Affairs), vice Paula J. Dobriansky, resigned.

William E. Spriggs,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Labor, vice Leon R. Sequeira, resigned.

Inez Moore Tenenbaum,
of South Carolina, to be a Commissioner of the Consumer Product Safety Commission for a term of 7 years from October 27, 2006, vice Harold D. Stratton, resigned.

Inez Moore Tenenbaum,
of South Carolina, to be Chairman of the Consumer Product Safety Commission, vice Harold D. Stratton, resigned.

Submitted June 10

Robert V. Abbey,
of Nevada, to be Director of the Bureau of Land Management, vice James L. Caswell, resigned.

Harry R. Hoglander,
of Massachusetts, to be a member of the National Mediation Board for a term expiring July 1, 2011 (reappointment).

Timothy J. Roemer,
of Indiana, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to India.

Submitted June 11

Michael Anthony Battle, Sr.,
of Georgia, to be Representative of the United States of America to the African Union, with the rank and status of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary.

Donald Sternoff Beyer, Jr.,
of Virginia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Switzerland, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Principality of Liechtenstein.

Martha Larzelere Campbell,
of Michigan, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Donald Henry Gips,
of Colorado, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of South Africa.

Gordon Gray,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Tunisia.

Rocco Landesman,
of New York, to be Chairperson of the National Endowment for the Arts for a term of 4 years, vice Dana Gioia, resigned.

Alfonso E. Lenhardt,
of New York, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the United Republic of Tanzania.

John R. Nay,
of Michigan, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Suriname.

John R. Norris,
of the District of Columbia, to be a member of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for the remainder of the term expiring June 30, 2012, vice Joseph Timothy Kelliher, resigned.

Daniel M. Rooney,
of Pennsylvania, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Ireland.

Richard J. Schmierer,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Sultanate of Oman.

Pamela Jo Howell Slutz,
of Texas, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Burundi.

Vinai K. Thummalapally,
of Colorado, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Belize.

Joseph W. Westphal,
of New York, to be Under Secretary of the Army, vice Nelson M. Ford.

Submitted June 16

Nicole A. Avant,
of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

Howard W. Gutman,
of Maryland, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Belgium.

Submitted June 17

Vilma S. Martinez,
of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Argentina.

Withdrawn June 17

Donald Michael Remy,
of Virginia, to be General Counsel of the Department of the Army, vice Benedict S. Cohen, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on April 20, 2009.

Submitted June 18

Edward M. Avalos,
of New Mexico, to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, vice Bruce I. Knight, resigned.

Miguel Humberto Diaz,
of Minnesota, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Holy See.

Juan M. Garcia III,
of Texas, to be an Assistant Secretary of the Navy, vice William A. Navas, Jr., resigned.

Deborah A.P. Hersman,
of Virginia, to be a member of the National Transportation Safety Board for a term expiring December 31, 2013 (reappointment).

Deborah A.P. Hersman,
of Virginia, to be Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board for a term of 2 years, vice Mark V. Rosenker, term expired.

David J. Kappos,
of California, to be Under Secretary of Commerce for Intellectual Property and Director of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, vice Jonathan W. Dudas, resigned.

Richard A. Lidinsky, Jr.,
of Maryland, to be a Federal Maritime Commissioner for the term expiring June 30, 2012, vice A. Paul Anderson, resigned.

James J. Markowsky,
of Massachusetts, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy (Fossil Energy), vice Jeffrey D. Jarrett, resigned.

Warren F. Miller, Jr.,
of New Mexico, to be an Assistant Secretary of Energy (Nuclear Energy), vice Dennis R. Spurgeon.

Robert Perciasepe,
of New York, to be Deputy Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Marcus C. Peacock, resigned.

Submitted June 19

Joseph A. Greenaway, Jr.,
of New Jersey, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Third Circuit, vice Samuel A. Alito, Jr., elevated.

Beverly B. Martin,
of Georgia, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Eleventh Circuit, vice R. Lanier Anderson III, retired.

Mark Henry Gitenstein,
of the District of Columbia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Romania.

Craig E. Hooks,
of Kansas, to be an Assistant Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, vice Luis Luna, resigned.

Submitted June 22

John R. Bass,
of New York, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Georgia.

Charles F. Bolden, Jr.,
of Texas, to be Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, vice Michael D. Griffin, resigned.

Ertharin Cousin,
of Illinois, for the rank of Ambassador during her tenure of service as U.S. Representative to the United Nations Agencies for Food and Agriculture.

James B. Foley,
of New York, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Croatia.

Lori Garver,
of Virginia, to be Deputy Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, vice Shana L. Dale, resigned.

Kenneth E. Gross, Jr.,
of Virginia, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Tajikistan.

Jerry P. Lanier,
of North Carolina, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Uganda.

Warren F. Miller, Jr.,
of New Mexico, to be Director of the Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management, Department of Energy, vice Edward F. Sproat III, resigned.

Teddy Bernard Taylor,
of Maryland, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Papua New Guinea, and to serve concurrently and without additional compensation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Solomon Islands and Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Vanuatu.

Submitted June 23

Joan M. Evans,
of Oregon, to be an Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs (Congressional and Legislative Affairs), vice Christine O. Hill, resigned.

Submitted June 24

James Legarde Hudson,
of the District of Columbia, to be U.S. Director of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, vice Kenneth L. Peel.

John Victor Roos,
of California, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Japan.

James B. Smith,
of New Hampshire, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Submitted June 25

Meredith Attwell Baker,
of Virginia, to be a member of the Federal Communications Commission for the remainder of the term expiring June 30, 2011, vice Kevin J. Martin, resigned.

Mignon L. Clyburn,
of South Carolina, to be a member of the Federal Communications Commission for a term of 5 years from July 1, 2007, vice Deborah Taylor Tate, term expired.

Judith Gail Garber,
of Virginia, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Latvia.

Christopher A. Hart,
of Colorado, to be a member of the National Transportation Safety Board for a term expiring December 31, 2012, vice Steven R. Chealander, resigned.

Charlene Edwards Honeywell,
of Florida, to be U.S. District Judge for the Middle District of Florida, vice Susan C. Bucklew, retired.

Kerri-Ann Jones,
of Maine, to be an Assistant Secretary of State for Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, vice Claudia A. McMurray, resigned.

Samuel Louis Kaplan,
of Minnesota, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Kingdom of Morocco.

David Killion,
of the District of Columbia, for the rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service as the U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.

James Knight,
of Alabama, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Benin.

Karen Kornbluh,
of New York, to be Representative of the United States of America to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, with the rank of Ambassador.

Bruce J. Oreck,
of Colorado, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Finland.

Charles Aaron Ray,
of Maryland, a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Jeffrey L. Viken,
of South Dakota, to be U.S. District Judge for the District of South Dakota, vice Lawrence L. Piersol, retiring.

Appendix C—Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released January 22

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a briefing by senior administration officials

Released January 23

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released January 26

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released January 27

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released January 28

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and Interior Secretary Kenneth L. Salazar

Statement by the Press Secretary on the election of Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad as Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Arkansas

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Kentucky

Advance text of the President's remarks on the national economy

Released January 29

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Advance text of the President's remarks on signing the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009

Released January 30

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Missouri

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Washington

Fact Sheet: White House Announces Middle Class Task Force

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chair Christina D. Romer on the fourth quarter 2008 advance GDP estimate

Released January 31

Excerpts of the President's remarks at the Alfalfa Club dinner

Released February 2

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's meeting with Democratic congressional leaders

Released February 3

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Announcement: White House Releases State-by-State Employment Data on Impact of American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan

Text: Statement by Thomas A. Daschle on his decision to withdraw his name from consideration to be Secretary of Health and Human Services

Text: Letter from Nancy Killefer on her decision to withdraw her name from consideration to be Chief Performance Officer

Released February 4

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a background briefing by senior administration officials on executive compensation

Statement by the Press Secretary: Treasury Announces New Restrictions on Executive Compensation

Announcement: White House Releases Additional State-Specific Impacts of American Recovery and Reinvestment Plan

Advance text of the President's remarks on executive compensation

Advance text of the President's remarks on signing Children's Health Insurance Program legislation

Released February 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Kentucky

Statement by the Press Secretary: Obama Announces White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships

Advance text of the President's remarks at the National Prayer Breakfast

Advance text of the President's remarks to the House Democratic Caucus Issues Conference in Williamsburg, VA

Released February 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: Obama Announces Economic Advisory Board

Statement by the Press Secretary on the latest unemployment statistics

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Arkansas

Text: Statement by Council of Economic Advisers Chair Christina D. Romer on the latest unemployment statistics

Advance text of the President's remarks on the establishment of the President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board

Released February 9

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of remarks by National Security Adviser James L. Jones, Jr., at the Munich Conference on Security Policy on February 8

Statement by the Press Secretary: Governor Cris to Join President at Fort Myers Town Hall Meeting Tomorrow

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Directs the National Security and Homeland Security Advisers to Conduct Immediate Cyber Security Review

Advance text of the President's remarks in Elkhart, IN

Advance text of the President's opening remarks at a news conference

Released February 10

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Advance text of the President's remarks in Fort Myers, Florida

Released February 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Advance text of the President's remarks at the reopening of Ford's Theatre

Released February 12

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on Senator Judd A. Gregg's decision to withdraw his name for consideration to be Secretary of Commerce

Advance text of the President's remarks at a Lincoln bicentennial celebration

Advance text of the President's remarks at the Abraham Lincoln Association annual banquet in Springfield, IL

Released February 13

Transcript of a briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President and First Lady to Host Concert Honoring Stevie Wonder in the East Room on February 25

Advance text of the President's remarks to the Business Council

Released February 14

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Promotes Community Service in NBA All-Star Game Message

Released February 15

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Oklahoma

Released February 16

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released February 17

Transcripts of press gaggles by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communication Denis R. McDonough on the President's visit to Canada

Statement by the Press Secretary on restructuring reports submitted by General Motors and Chrysler

Statement by the Press Secretary on the upcoming visit by Prime Minister Taro Aso of Japan

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Missouri

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Oklahoma

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Tennessee

Announcement: White House Releases State by State Numbers; American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to Save or Create 3.5 Million Jobs

Advance text of the President's remarks on signing the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 in Denver, CO

Released February 18

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a press briefing by Treasury Secretary Timothy F. Geithner, Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun L.S. Donovan, and Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation Chairman Sheila C. Bair on the home mortgage plan

Announcement: National Security Adviser James L. Jones, Jr., to travel to Miami, Florida, to meet with King Juan Carlos I of Spain and participate in the Spain-Florida Economic Development Symposium

Advance text of the President's remarks on the home mortgage crisis in Phoenix, AZ

Text of a White House executive summary on the homeowner affordability and stability plan

Released February 19

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and Deputy Secretary of State James B. Steinberg

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama and Prime Minister Harper Vow Joint Effort on North American Economic Recovery

Announcement: White House Announces 2009 Governors' Dinner

Released February 20

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Extends Gulf Coast Rebuilding Office; Sends Cabinet Members to Gulf Coast and New Orleans

Announcement: Treasury Secretary Timothy F. Geithner and National Economic Council Director Lawrence H. Summers Convene Official Designees to Presidential Task Force on the Auto Industry

Released February 21

Statement by the Press Secretary on an upcoming visit by Prime Minister Gordon Brown of the United Kingdom

Released February 23

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces $15 Billion in Medicaid Relief from ARRA Headed to States

Announcement: Vice President Biden to Oversee the Administration's Implementation of the Recovery Act's Provisions

Released February 24

Excerpts of the President's address to the joint session of the Congress

Advance text of the President's address to the joint session of the Congress

Text: Guest list for the First Lady's Box at the 2009 address to the joint session of the Congress

Released February 25

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Nominates Former Governor Gary Locke for Secretary of Commerce

Released February 26

Transcript of a press briefing by Office of Management and Budget Director Peter R. Orszag and Council of Economic Advisers Chair Christina D. Romer

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd of Australia to Washington

Released February 27

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs (dated February 26)

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing by Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates

Fact Sheet: Responsibly Ending the War in Iraq

Advance text of the President's remarks on military operations in Iraq at Camp Lejeune, NC

Released March 2

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Will Nominate Governor Kathleen Sebelius Secretary of HHS, Announces Release of $155 Million of ARRA Funds for Health Clinics Across America

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Illinois

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Oregon

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Washington

Released March 3

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama and Vice President Biden Announce Investment in Transportation Infrastructure and Jobs for Americans

Fact sheet: Highway Spending from Recovery Act Expected To Create or Save 150,000 Jobs by End of 2010

Transcript of the President's videotaped remarks to the AFL–CIO Executive Council

Released March 4

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs, Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano, and Secretary of Agriculture Thomas J. Vilsack

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to New York

Announcement: Reform Agenda at the Department of Agriculture

Fact sheet: Reforming Government Contracting

Released March 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: Visit by President Obama to Europe

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Indiana

Advance text of the President's remarks at the White House Forum on Health Reform

Released March 6

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: Upcoming visit by President Luis Inacio "Lula" Da Silva of Brazil to Washington

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces Series of Regional White House Forums to be Held Across Country

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.J. Res. 38

Fact sheet: Investing in Public Safety

Text: Statement by the Secretary of Labor Regarding the Monthly Employment Situation Report

Released March 9

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Advance text of the President's remarks on singing an Executive order removing barriers to responsible scientific research involving human stem cells and a memorandum on scientific integrity

Released March 10

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Fact sheet: Expanding the Promise of Education in America

Advance text of the President's remarks to the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

Released March 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces White House Council on Women and Girls

Advance text of the President's remarks on Government spending and earmark reform

Released March 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Excerpts of the President's remarks to the Business Roundtable

Released March 13

Transcript of press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of remarks by National Economic Council Director Lawrence H. Summers at the Brookings Institute

Released March 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama and Secretary Geithner Announce Plans To Unlock Credit for Small Businesses

Excerpts of the President's remarks to small-business owners and community lenders

Released March 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released March 18

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Statement by the Press Secretary on the 2010 Veterans Affairs budget proposal

Advance text of the President's opening remarks at a town hall meeting in Costa Mesa, CA

Text: Background facts compiled by the Council of Economic Advisers on California's economic situation

Released March 19

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces $2.4 Billion in Funding to Support Next Generation Electric Vehicles

Advance text of the President's opening remarks at a town hall meeting in Los Angeles, CA

Advance text of the President's remarks at the Southern California Edison Electric Vehicle Technical Center in Pomona, CA

Text: Funding for California in the first 30 day since signing of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

Released March 20

Transcript of press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Barack Obama to Deliver Spring 2009 Commencement Addresses

Advanced test of the President's remarks to the National Conference of State Legislatures

Released March 23

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a press briefing by Secretary of the Treasury Timothy F. Geithner

Fact sheet: Investing in our Clean Energy Future

Released March 24

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of NATO Secretary General Jakob Gijsbert "Jaap" de Hoop Scheffer

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to North Dakota

Text: Administration Officials Announce U.S.-Mexico Border Security Policy: A Comprehensive Response & Commitment

Text of an op-ed column by the President concerning global economic cooperation

Excerpts of the President's opening remarks at a news conference

Released March 25

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing by Office of Management and Budget Director Peter R. Orszag on congressional budget plans

Released March 26

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Minnesota

Advance text of the President's remarks to viewers of Univision's "Premio Lo Nuestro" Latin music awards

Released March 27

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a press briefing by Bruce Riedel, chair, interagency review of policy towards Afghanistan and Pakistan, Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Ambassador Richard C. Holbrooke, and Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Michelle A. Flournoy on the new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan

Advance text of the President's remarks on U.S. military and diplomatic strategies for Afghanistan and Pakistan

Released March 28

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs, Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Denis R. McDonough, and Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economic Affairs Michael Froman on the agenda for the G–20 summit, NATO summit, and EU summit

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces Launch of the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate

Released March 30

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1512

Advance text of the President's remarks on the U.S. automobile industry

Released March 31

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a press briefing by Deputy National Security Adviser for International Economic Affairs Michael Froman on the G–20 summit

Text: Tomorrow: White House Director of Auto Communities and Workers to Visit Michigan

Released April 1

Transcripts of background readouts by senior administration officials on the President's meeting with President Dmitry A. Medvedev of Russia

Transcripts of background readouts by senior administration officials on the President's meeting with President Hu Jintao of China

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's meeting with President Hu Jintao of China

Released April 2

Transcript of a background readout by senior administration officials on the President's meeting with President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's meeting with President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea

Advance text of the President's opening remarks at a news conference

Released April 3

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released April 4

Transcript of press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs, National Security Adviser James L. Jones, Jr., and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Denis R. McDonough

Fact sheet: President Obama's Participation in the 60th Anniversary NATO Summit Celebration in Strasbourg-Kehl

Released April 5

Transcripts of press gaggles by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a press gaggle by a senior administration official on the President's meeting with Prime Minister Donald Tusk of Poland

Transcript of a press gaggle by a senior administration official of the President's meeting with President Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero of Spain

Advance text of the President's remarks in Hradcany Square in Prague, Czech Republic

Released April 6

Advance text of the President's remarks to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey

Released April 7

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released April 8

Text: Tomorrow: White House Director of Recovery for Auto Communities and Workers to visit Ohio

Released April 9

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces the Creation of a Joint Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces Accelerated Purchase of 17,600 New American Vehicles for Government Fleet

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Minnesota

Text of background information by the President's Council of Economic Advisers on refinancing activity and mortgage rates

Released April 12

Announcement: White House Easter Egg Roll details and talent lineup

Released April 13

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and National Security Council Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs Daniel A. Restrepo

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing by National Security Council Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs Daniel A. Restrepo, White House Adviser for the Summit of the Americas Jeffrey Davidow, and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Denis R. McDonough on the President's visit to Mexico and Trinidad and Tobago

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces funding for the 2000th transportation project under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

Statement by the Press Secretary on the United Nations condemnation of the North Korean missile launch

Fact sheet: Reaching Out to the Cuban People

Released April 14

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Excerpts of the President's remarks on the national economy at Georgetown University

Advance text of the President's remarks on the national economy at Georgetown University

Released April 15

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Underscores Commitment to Restoring Fairness to the Tax Code and Providing Tax Relief to Working Americans

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit by King Abdullah II of Jordan

Fact sheet: Overview of the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act

Advance text of the President's remarks on tax relief

Announcement: President and Mrs. Obama Release 2008 Income Tax Returns

Released April 16

Transcript of a briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs, White House Adviser for the Summit of the Americas Jeffrey Davidow, National Security Council Senior Director for Western Hemisphere Affairs Daniel A. Restrepo, and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Denis R. McDonough on the President's visit to the Summit of the Americas

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama, Vice President Biden, Secretary LaHood Call for U.S. High-Speed Passenger Trains

Statement by the Press Secretary: U.S.-Mexico Announce Bilateral Framework on Clean Energy and Climate Change

Fact sheet: U.S.-Mexico Discuss New Approach to Bilateral Relationship

Text of an op-ed column by the President titled "Choosing a Better Future in the Americas"

Released April 17

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a press gaggle by a senior administration official

Statement by the Press Secretary on the conclusion of a review of digital communications and information infrastructure (cyberspace)

Released April 18

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs, National Economic Council Director Lawrence H. Summers, and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Denis R. McDonough on the first plenary session of the Summit of the Americas

Transcript of a press briefing by Secretary of Energy Steven Chu and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Denis R. McDonough on the second and third plenary sessions of the Summit of the Americas

Transcript of a background briefing by senior administration officials on the President's meeting with leaders of the Union of South American Nations

Transcript of a press gaggle by a senior administration official

Statement by the Press Secretary: New $100 Million Microfinance Growth Fund for the Western Hemisphere

Released April 19

Transcript of a background briefing by senior administration officials on the President's meetings with President Rene Garcia Preval of Haiti and President Michelle Bachelet Jeria of Chile

Statement by the Press Secretary: The United States and the 2009 Summit of the Americas: Securing Our Citizens' Future

Released April 20

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: Tuesday: President Barack Obama to Sign Landmark Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's first Cabinet meeting

Released April 21

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a press briefing by Alan D. Solomont, Chair, and Stephen Goldsmith, Vice Chair, Corporation for National and Community Service Board of Directors, and White House Domestic Policy Council Director Melody C. Barnes on the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Florida

Released April 22

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and Secretary of Agriculture Thomas J. Vilsack

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Indiana

Fact sheet: President Obama Highlights Vision for Clean Energy Economy

Advance text of the President's remarks on clean energy in Newton, IA

Text of an op-ed column by Secretary of Energy Steven Chu and Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis titled "Building the American Clean Energy Economy"

Released April 23

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Discusses Credit Card Principles Following Meeting with Credit Card Executives

Statement by the Press Secretary: Primetime Presidential News Conference Scheduled for Wednesday, April 29th

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 520

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Georgia

Released April 24

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: Reforming Student Loans to Make College More Affordable

Statement by the Press Secretary on the situation in Sri Lanka

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 383

Released April 26

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and Secretary of Homeland Security Janet A. Napolitano, Assistant to the President for Homeland Secretary and Counterterrorism John O. Brennan, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Acting Director Richard E. Besser on the influenza outbreak

Released April 27

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces Members of Science and Technology Advisory Council

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Arkansas

Text of a statement by White House Military Office Director Louis Caldera on the low-altitude Air Force One flight over New York City

Text of a statement by Mexican Embassy Spokesman Ricardo Alday regarding the death of Mexico's National Anthropology Director Felipe Solis

Fact sheet: A Historic Commitment to Research and Education

Advance text of the President's remarks at the National Academy of Sciences

Released April 28

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on the 61st anniversary of Israel's independence

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Alabama

Released April 29

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Excerpts of the President's opening remarks at a news conference

Excerpts from Spanish-language media outlets documenting the Obama administration's outreach to the Hispanic community

Released April 30

Transcript of a briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a background briefing by senior administration officials on the U.S. auto industry

Statement by the Press Secretary: Obama Administration Auto Restructuring Initiative

Statement by the Press Secretary: Joint Statement: President Obama and Prime Minister Harper on United States-Canada Support for Chrysler LLC

Released May 1

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of teleconference briefing by Small Business Administration Associate Administrator for Capital Access Eric Zarnikow and Economic Adviser to the President Brian Deese on Small Business Association expansion of eligibility for loans for small businesses

Announcement: Next Week: Director for Recovery for Auto Communities and Workers to Visit Michigan

Released May 4

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Fact sheet: Leveling the Playing Field: Curbing Tax Havens and Removing Tax Incentives for Shifting Jobs Overseas

Released May 5

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources Jacob L. Lew

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces Steps to Support Sustainable Energy Options

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama to Request $50 Million to Identify and Expand Effective, Innovative Non-Profits

Fact sheet: American Leadership on Global Health

Announcement: 2009–2010 Class of White House Fellows

Released May 6

Transcript of a press briefing by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a press briefing by National Security Adviser James L. Jones, Jr., on the President's meeting with President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan and President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan

Transcript of a background briefing by senior administration officials on the fiscal year 2010 budget

Released May 7

Transcript of press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a press briefing by Office of Management and Budget Director Peter R. Orszag on the fiscal year 2010 budget

Fact sheet: The President's 2010 Budget

Advance text of the President's remarks on the Federal budget

Released May 8

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Accepts Resignation of Louis Caldera as Director of the White House Military Office

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that on May 7 the President signed H.R. 1626 and S.J. Res. 8

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 39

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Alabama

Advance text of the President's remarks on the national economy and job training

Released May 9

Announcement: Today: President Meets With Captain Richard Phillips

Released May 10

Excerpts of the President's remarks on health care reform

Announcement: Today: Conference Call on Major Initiative to Reform Health Care and Reduce Costs

Released May 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a press briefing by a senior administration official on the Council of Economic Advisers' report measuring Recovery Act progress creating and saving jobs

Statement by the Press Secretary: CEA Releases New Report on Measuring Recovery Act Progress Creating, Saving Jobs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Launches Office of Public Engagement: A New Name, Mission for White House Liaison Office

Statement by the Press Secretary on Gen. David D. McKiernan, USA commander, NATO International Security Forces, Afghanistan

Fact sheet: Coming Together to Bring Down the Cost of Health Care

Text: Letter to the President from health reform stakeholders

Released May 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on upcoming visits by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, and President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 586

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Mississippi

Fact sheet: Innovative Workplace Practices: A Discussion With President Obama

Released May 13

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Advance text of the President's commencement address at Arizona State University in Tempe, AZ

Released May 14

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Fact sheet: Protecting American Credit Card Holders

Released May 15

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Appoints Dr. Thomas R. Frieden as CDC Director

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 735

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to West Virginia

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Tennessee

Released May 16

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's visit to Russia, Italy, and Ghana in July`

Statement by the Press Secretary on the national elections in India

Released May 17

Advance text of the President's commencement address at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, IN

Released May 18

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a background briefing by a senior administration official on the White House announcement on auto emissions and efficiency standards

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama to Deliver Commencement Address at US Naval Academy in Annapolis on May 22

Released May 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of press briefing by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton on humanitarian aid to Pakistan

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces National Fuel Efficiency Policy

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete of Tanzania

Statement by the Press Secretary on Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's announcement of humanitarian aid to Pakistan

Fact sheet: Obama Administration National Fuel Efficiency Policy: Good for Consumers, Good for the Economy, and Good for the Country

Released May 20

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: Reforms for American Homeowners and Consumers

Fact sheet: The Helping Families Save Their Homes Act

Fact sheet: The Fraud Enforcement and Recovery Act

Released May 21

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: White House Announces Open Government Website, Initiative

Advance text of the President's remarks on national security

Released May 22

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Fact sheet: Reforms To Protect American Credit Card Holders

Advance text of the President's commencement address at the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD

Released May 26

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on South Korea's endorsement of the Proliferation Security Initiative

Released May 27

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Marks 100th Day of Recovery Act with Release of "100 Days, 100 projects" Report

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Florida

Advance text of the President's remarks at Nellis Air Force Base, NV

Released May 28

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's visit to Landstuhl Regional Medical Facility in Germany

Statement by the Press Secretary: Next Week: Cabinet Secretaries, Obama Administration Officials to Travel Across Midwest, Discuss Federal Recovery Efforts for Auto Communities and Workers

Released May 29

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Transcript of a teleconference press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs, Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Denis R. McDonough, and Deputy National Security Adviser and National Security Council Chief of Staff Mark Lippert on the President's visit to Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Germany, and France

Statement by the Press Secretary: Designation of Significant Foreign Narcotics Traffickers

Statement by the Press Secretary on the terrorist attacks in Iran

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Kentucky

Fact sheet: Cyberspace Policy Review: Assuring a Trusted and Resilient Information and Communications Infrastructure

Text of a statement from the New York State Law Enforcement Council on Judge Sonia Sotomayor's nomination to the Supreme Court

Released May 31

Fact sheet: Obama Administration Restructuring Initiative for General Motors

Released June 1

Transcript of a background briefing by senior administration officials on the General Motors restructuring (dated May 31)

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Text of a letter to Senators Reid, McConnell, Leahy, and Sessions from law clerks expressing their support of Judge Sonia Sotomayor's nomination to the Supreme Court

Released June 2

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released June 3

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs, White House Speechwriter Ben Rhodes, and Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Denis R. McDonough on the President's remarks in Cairo, Egypt

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Alabama

Released June 4

Advance text of the President's remarks in Cairo, Egypt

Released June 6

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy

Advance text of the President's remarks on the 65th anniversary of D-Day in Normandy, France

Released June 8

Transcript of a Press Briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and Chief Economist to the Vice President Jared Bernstein

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama and Vice President Biden Announce Roadmap to Recovery

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai of Zimbabwe

Released June 9

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and Office of Management and Budget Director Peter R. Orszag

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Calls for Restoring Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Requirements

Advance text of the President's remarks on financial stability and pay-as-you-go legislation

Released June 10

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and Secretary of Commerce Gary F. Locke

Released June 11

Transcript of a press gaggle by Deputy Press Secretary William Burton

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Alaska

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Iowa

Advance text of the President's opening remarks at a townhall meeting in Green Bay, WI

Released June 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs and U.S. Permanent Representative to the U.N. Susan E. Rice

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of President Alvaro Uribe Velez of Colombia

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of President Michelle Bachelet Jeria of Chile

Excerpts of remarks by National Economic Council Director Lawrence H. Summers at the Council on Foreign Relations

Released June 13

Statement by the Press Secretary on the election in Iran

Released June 14

Statement by the Press Secretary on a speech delivered by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel on the Middle East peace process

Released June 15

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Advance text of the President's remarks to the American Medical Association National Conference in Chicago, IL

Released June 16

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces New White House Office of Olympic, Paralympic, and Youth Sport

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Arkansas

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to South Dakota

Released June 17

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Unveils 'United We Serve,' Calls on All Americans to Commit to Meaningful Volunteer Service in Their Daily Lives

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama To Announce Comprehensive Plan for Regulatory Reform

Statement by the Press Secretary on the Bipartisan Policy Center's health reform proposal

Fact sheet: Presidential Memorandum on Federal Benefits and Non-Discrimination

Advance text of the President's remarks on financial regulatory reform

Released June 18

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany to the White House

Released June 19

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Launches National Conversation on Importance of Fatherhood and Personal Responsibility

Statement by the Press Secretary announced that the President signed H.R. 663, H.R. 918, H.R. 1284, and H.R. 1595

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Oklahoma

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Missouri

Transcript of the President's answer to a question on Iran asked by Harry Smith of CBS's "Early Show"

Excerpts of the President's remarks at the Radio and Television Correspondents Association dinner

Released June 22

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Roberts L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Commemorates Anniversary of Olmstead and Announces New Initiatives to Assist Americans with Disabilities

Fact sheet: The Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Prevention Control Act of 2009

Released June 23

Statement by the Press Secretary on the visit of Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende of the Netherlands to Washington, DC

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Oklahoma

Advance text of the President's opening remarks at a news conference

Announcement: Thursday: President and First Lady to Join Hundreds of Congressional Family Members for 'United We Serve' Service Project at Fort McNair

Announcement: White House Senior Adviser Valerie B. Jarrett and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan To Hold White House Roundtable on Title IX

Released June 24

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs, Internal Revenue Service Commissioner Douglas H. Shulman, and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Kansas

Released June 25

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: On Day Three of Clean Energy Week, Secretary Donovan Addresses Importance of Developing Energy-Efficient, Affordable Housing, Secretary Chu Highlights New Recovery Act Funding for Clean Energy Projects

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Appoints 2009–2010 Class of White House Fellows

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Kansas

Released June 26

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Released June 28

Announcement: President Obama To Hold Health Care Town Hall in Annandale, VA on Wednesday, July 1, 2009

Released June 29

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: Obama Administration Launches New Energy Efficiency Efforts

Released June 30

Transcript of a press briefing by Robert L. Gibbs

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama to Highlight Innovative Programs That are Transforming Communities Across the Nation

Statement by the Press Secretary: President Obama Announces Rural Tour With Cabinet Secretaries and Administration Officials

Statement by the Press Secretary announced that the President signed H.R. 813, H.R. 837, H.R. 2344, S. 407, and S. 615

Appendix D—Presidential Documents Published in the Federal Register

This appendix lists Presidential documents released by the Office of the Press Secretary and published in the Federal Register. The texts of the documents are printed in the Federal Register (F.R.) at the citations listed below. The documents are also printed in title 3 of the Code of Federal Regulations and in the Compilation of Presidential Documents.

PROCLAMATIONS

Proc. No.	*Date 2009*	*Subject*	*74 F.R. Page*
8343	Jan. 20	National Day of Renewal and Reconciliation, 2009	4341
8344	Feb. 2	American Heart Month, 2009	6343
8345	Feb. 2	National African American History Month, 2009	6345
8346	Feb. 27	American Red Cross Month, 2009	9735
8347	Feb. 27	National Consumer Protection Week, 2009	9737
8348	Feb. 27	Save Your Vision Week, 2009	9739
8349	Feb. 27	Read Across America Day, 2009	9741
8350	Mar. 2	Irish-American Heritage Month, 2009	9745
8351	Mar. 3	Women's History Month, 2009	9747
8352	Mar. 13	National Poison Prevention Week, 2009	11637
8353	Mar. 24	Greek Independence Day: A National Day of Celebration of Greek and American Democracy, 2009	13997
8354	Apr. 1	National Cancer Control Month, 2009	15629
8355	Apr. 1	National Child Abuse Prevention Month, 2009	15631
8356	Apr. 1	National Donate Life Month, 2009	15633
8357	Apr. 3	Education and Sharing Day, U.S.A., 2009	15829
8358	Apr. 8	National D.A.R.E. Day, 2009	16751
8359	Apr. 8	National Sexual Assault Awareness Month, 2009	17069
8360	Apr. 9	National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day, 2009	17369
8361	Apr. 14	Pan American Day and Pan American Week, 2009	17765
8362	Apr. 17	National Park Week, 2009	18447
8363	Apr. 21	National Volunteer Week, 2009	18973
8364	Apr. 22	Earth Day, 2009	18975
8365	Apr. 24	National Crime Victims' Rights Week, 2009	19371
8366	Apr. 28	National Equal Pay Day, 2009	20403
8367	Apr. 30	Law Day, U.S.A., 2009	20861
8368	May 1	Loyalty Day, 2009	20863
8369	May 1	Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, 2009	21241
8370	May 1	National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, 2009	21243
8371	May 4	Older Americans Month, 2009	21527
8372	May 4	National Charter Schools Week, 2009	21529

PROCLAMATIONS (Continued)

Proc. No.	*Date 2009*	*Subject*	*74 F.R. Page*
8373	May 6	World Trade Week, 2009	22085
8374	May 7	National Day of Prayer, 2009	22087
8375	May 8	Military Spouse Day, 2009	22417
8376	May 8	Mother's Day, 2009	22419
8377	May 11	National Defense Transportation Day and National Transportation Week, 2009	22815
8378	May 11	Peace Officers Memorial Day and Police Week, 2009	22817
8379	May 12	Jewish American Heritage Month, 2009	23107
8380	May 14	Armed Forces Day, 2009	23603
8381	May 15	National Safe Boating Week, 2009	23605
8382	May 15	Small Business Week, 2009	23607
8383	May 20	Emergency Medical Services Week, 2009	24689
8384	May 20	National Maritime Day, 2009	24691
8385	May 22	Prayer for Peace, Memorial Day, 2009	25383
8386	May 26	National Hurricane Preparedness Week, 2009	25613
8387	June 1	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month, 2009	26929
			27677
8388	June 1	Great Outdoors Month, 2009	26931
8389	June 2	African-American Music Appreciation Month, 2009	27067
8390	June 2	National Caribbean-American Heritage Month, 2009	27069
8391	June 11	Flag Day and National Flag Week, 2009	28593
8392	June 12	National Oceans Month, 2009	28595
8393	June 18	Father's Day, 2009	29931
8394	June 29	To Modify Duty-Free Treatment Under the Generalized System of Preferences, and for Other Purposes	31821

EXECUTIVE ORDERS

E.O. No.	*Date 2009*	*Subject*	*74 F.R. Page*
13489	Jan. 21	Presidential Records	4669
13490	Jan. 21	Ethics Commitments by Executive Branch Personnel	4673
13491	Jan. 22	Ensuring Lawful Interrogations	4893
13492	Jan. 22	Review and Disposition of Individuals Detained at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base and Closure of Detention Facilities	4897
13493	Jan. 22	Review of Detention Policy Options	4901
13494	Jan. 30	Economy in Government Contracting	6101
13495	Jan. 30	Nondisplacement of Qualified Workers Under Service Contracts	6103

EXECUTIVE ORDERS (Continued)

E.O. No.	*Date 2009*	*Subject*	*74 F.R. Page*
13496	Jan. 30	Notification of Employee Rights Under Federal Labor Laws	6107
13497	Jan. 30	Revocation of Certain Executive Orders Concerning Regulatory Planning and Review	6113
13498	Feb. 5	Amendments to Executive Order 13199 and Establishment of the President's Advisory Council for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships	6533
13499	Feb. 5	Further Amendments to Executive Order 12835, Establishment of the National Economic Council	6979
13500	Feb. 5	Further Amendments to Executive Order 12859, Establishment of the Domestic Policy Council	6981
13501	Feb. 6	Establishment of the President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board	6983
13502	Feb. 6	Use of Project Labor Agreements for Federal Construction Projects	6985
13503	Feb. 19	Establishment of the White House Office of Urban Affairs	8139
13504	Feb. 20	Amending Executive Order 13390	8431
13505	Mar. 9	Removing Barriers to Responsible Scientific Research Involving Human Stem Cells	10667
13506	Mar. 11	Establishing a White House Council on Women and Girls	11271
13507	Apr. 8	Establishment of the White House Office of Health Reform	17071
13508	May 12	Chesapeake Bay Protection and Restoration	23099
13509	June 23	Establishing a White House Council on Automotive Communities and Workers	30903

OTHER PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Doc No.	*Date 2009*	*Subject*	*74 F.R. Page*
	Jan. 21	Memorandum: Pay Freeze	4679
	Jan. 21	Memorandum: Freedom of Information Act	4683
	Jan. 21	Memorandum: Transparency and Open Government	4685
	Jan. 23	Memorandum: Mexico City Policy and Assistance for Voluntary Population Planning	4903
	Jan. 26	Memorandum: State of California Request for Waiver Under 42 U.S.C. 7543(b), the Clean Air Act	4905

OTHER PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS (Continued)

Doc No.	*Date 2009*	*Subject*	*74 F.R. Page*
	Jan. 26	Memorandum: The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007	4907
09–15	Jan. 27	Presidential Determination: Unexpected Urgent Refugee and Migration Needs Related To Gaza	6115
	Jan. 30	Memorandum: Regulatory Review	5977
	Jan. 30	Memorandum: White House Task Force on Middle-Class Working Families	5979
	Feb. 4	Memorandum: State Children's Health Insurance Program	6347
	Feb. 4	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect To the Situation in or in Relation to Côte d'Ivoire	6349
	Feb. 5	Memorandum: Appliance Efficiency Standards	6537
	Mar. 3	Memorandum: The Endangered Species Act	9753
	Mar. 3	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency with Respect to Zimbabwe	9751
	Mar. 4	Memorandum: Government Contracting	9755
	Mar. 9	Memorandum: Presidential Signing Statements	10669
	Mar. 9	Memorandum: Scientific Integrity	10671
09–16	Mar. 11	Presidential Determination: Unexpected Urgent Refugee and Migration Needs Related to the Continuing Conflict in Pakistan	11461
	Mar. 11	Notice: Continuation of the National Emergency With Respect to Iran	10999
	Mar. 20	Memorandum: Ensuring Responsible Spending of Recovery Act Funds	12531
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